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CAR SPECIAL**



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TOP 10
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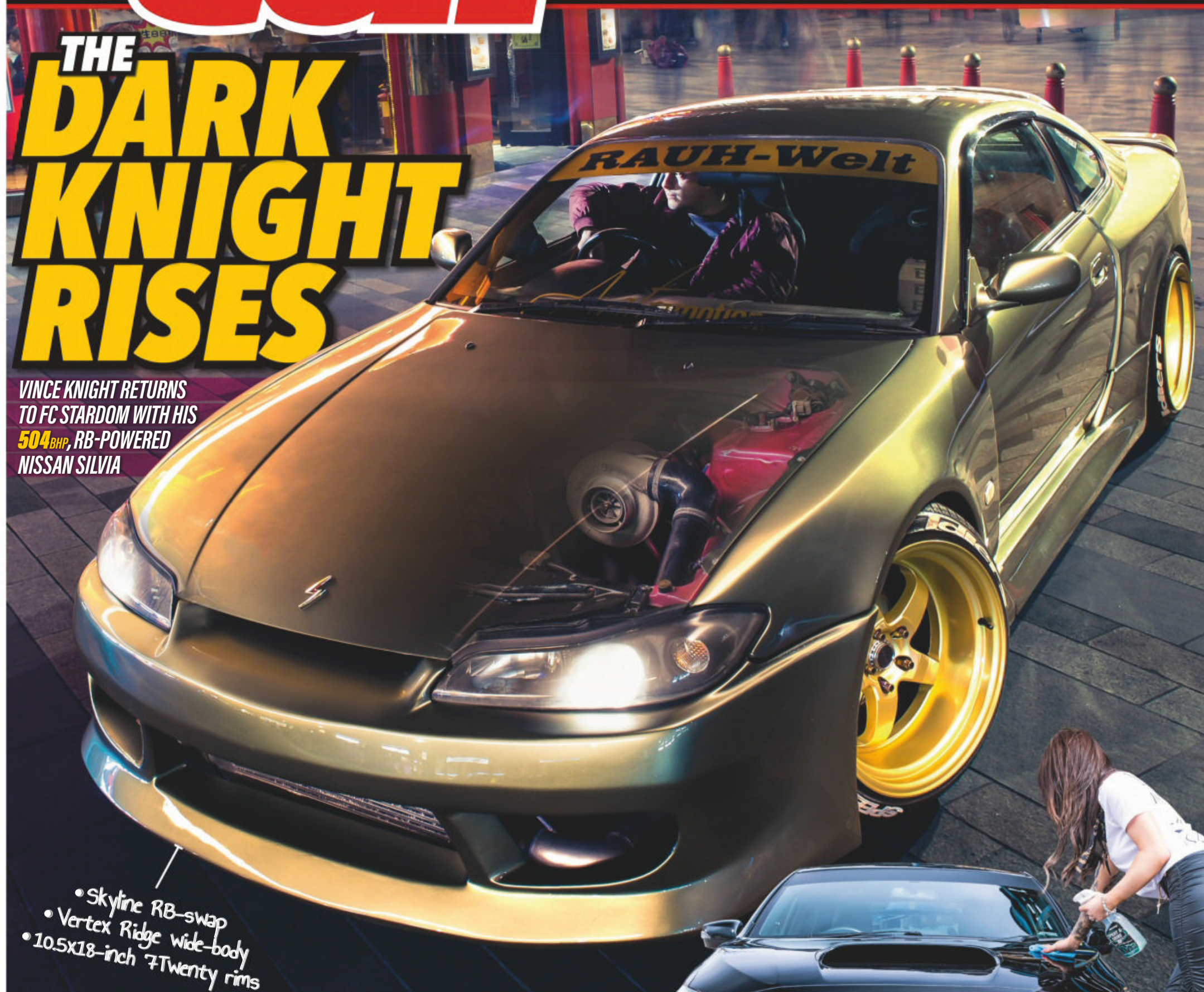
#408

car

DEFINING CAR CULTURE

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TO FC STARDOM WITH HIS
504BHP, RB-POWERED
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ED START

Issue 408 June 2019

Well, it's been quite a month on Fast Car. In fact, I don't think I've ever experienced an issue like it. At the heart of the fun and games was picking the car to spearhead this Japanese Special. My original plan was to run the Voomeran Mk2 Golf that took 2019's Tokyo Auto Salon by storm. Voomeran is a popular Euro/Vag tuning shop in Japan and sticking a German car on the cover of our annual Jap Special really appealed to me because of the controversy it would have caused, and because it's a cool twist on the theme. Oh, and because the car is the absolute bollocks.

Unfortunately, we couldn't make this happen in the time frame we had available but, fear not, we will be bringing you a full feature on this car in the future. So it was time for plan B!

And it was by no means a back-up plan because the next favourite was a UK built, 1000+bhp, Supra-powered GT86! The problem was the engine was in bits from a recent failure, and despite a huge effort by the tuners, they just couldn't get it rebuilt in time for our deadline. Once again it'll be one for the future. So on to plan C...

Plan C was to shoot a quad rotor RX-7 from the States but again this fell through. US-based photographer Mike Kuhn suggested a 6.7-litre, LS1 V8 turbo RX-7 as an alternative, and as alternatives go a 1200bhp FD was a bloody good one. But as you've probably noticed, it too didn't make the cover spot – although it did make the final line-up of feature cars and I'd highly recommend reading the feature on page 29.

So why another last minute change of plan? Well, just 48-hours from our print slot deadline, an old friend messaged me and asked if I'd like to feature his S15 that he'd just finished, and the pictures of this car answer that question. Although the RX-7 is of a much higher spec than the Silvia, it was still a no brainer to swap them over. You see, Vince's car has been a long time in the making and Dave Cox brought the fire with the pictures, plus I always prefer to champion British built cars over those from across the waters. So there you have it, that's how 7-percent of this month's magazine was chosen. We hope you enjoy the other 93-percent too...

Big Love,
Slim Jules

Jules

Feature of the Month:

Feature Of The Month: It's got to be the Jap Culture feature that starts on page 61. It's basically a documentation of Mark Riccioni's recent trips to Japan, and what he saw while he was on his travels. When you mention Japanese car culture you immediately think of Liberty Walk, RAUH-Welt BEGRIFF, HKS, Top Secret and other legendary tuners, but that's not even scrapping the surface of what their scene is all about! And this picture led feature shows just that.



Next Issue on sale 24 • 5 • 2019



SLIM JULES
EDITOR

"My favourite Japanese car? I'm going slightly controversial here, and opting for the gorgeous Lexus LC500!"



MIDGE
CONTRIBUTING
EDITOR

"Believe it or not, I've got a soft spot for the Daihatsu Sirion. A very underrated little car with bags of potential."



INITIAL G
ART EDITOR

"Hachiroku – nothing else comes close! Well apart from a R32 GT-R, my EP3, a Honda NSX, a..."



GLEND A
WEBSITE EDITOR

"Japanese cars? No thank you, it's all about Audis! Have you seen my RS4? It's almost as sexy as my beard!"

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Japanese Car Culture

Shakotan Culture – retro, boxy classics stanced with killer deep-dish wheels tucked deep within the uber-wide fenders. You won't see any air suspension here either; just a whole lot of metal on road scrapin'. **Location:** Izanami Wheel Co, Chiba



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UP FRONT

SPEED LIMITER LEGISLATION

should we be panicking?



In a word, no. Now is not the time to panic.

Although things may be about to get a little weird. You've probably heard in the news that the European Parliament is planning to introduce mandatory speed limiters in all new cars from 2022, which would apply to UK sales despite Brexit. The idea is to use the Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) system, which reads speed limit signs as well as using GPS data to limit a car's speed. It gets properly Big Brother when you learn that the plan would also introduce monitoring of driver drowsiness, lane-keep assist, and a data-logger to record what a car is doing before and during accidents. It's not just the EU that's working on these changes either – Volvo have recently announced that they'll be limiting all cars to 112mph from 2020, which had a number of people up in arms, but it's not worth actually getting too hysterical over it. Consider the fact that Japanese cars have all had that same limit since 1988 – hasn't stopped them developing some pretty seismic performance cars, has it? It should actually make cars better too: if everything's being engineered for 150mph+, it means tyre and suspension technology has to be more heavy-duty, window seals need to be more hardcore, cooling systems have to be beefier, and so on; remove the necessity to plan for all this, and cars will become

lighter and less complex, and that can only be a good thing. Besides, when do you ever go above 112mph? If you're planning to do so on track or the dragstrip, aftermarket tuners will have a workaround to bypass the limiter; you won't need to worry about that. Returning to the ISA system, it's also worth bearing in mind that, much like the speed-limiter systems already used by the likes of Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen, you can switch it off. It'll automatically be armed each time you turn the engine on, but it'll only take the press of a button to disarm it. You have to be able to disable it as a fail-safe, because the technology isn't yet good enough for speed limiter systems to function properly on smart motorways or roadworks with temporary speed restrictions. The key thing to remember is that the system is to encourage you to slow down, not to force you. Of course, if the data-logging system proves you were speeding or driving erratically prior to an accident, it'll make it very easy to convict you, but it's not going to call the police every time you creep up to 71mph on the motorway.

The introduction of ISA isn't a done deal as it still needs to be voted on after the European elections in May, and then all member states will need to agree on it – but if it does happen, it really isn't anything to

panic about.

One interesting point to note, however, is that if ISA does go through from 2022, the new cars of 2021 will become proper collectors' items. Much like the American muscle cars built before the 1970 Clean Air Act are more desirable because of their higher horsepower, the 2021's sports cars will be the last of the old-school breed. The idea of owning the last pre-ISA Porsche 911 or Ford Focus RS will tantalise investors not just in the decades to come, but in the very near future...



LOOK OUT, M3 – *Peugeot's coming for you!*



Fans of the brutally monstrous BMW M3 may be amused to learn that there's a French hybrid concept nipping at its heels. And whatever your feelings on hybrids, the spec of Peugeot's tasty 508 Sport Engineered Concept can't be ignored. Big French saloons have traditionally been a bit of a flop – a Peugeot 605 or a Citroën C6 could never hope to compete with the ubiquitous Beemers and Mercs – but this 508 is a proper looker, and the powertrain sounds like a riot: it starts with the 197bhp 1.6-litre turbo four-pot from the 208 GTI, adds in a 110bhp electric motor, and both of these things power the front axle... then the rear end also gets a 200bhp motor for good measure. Fans of maths will note that this adds up to 507bhp, although due to complicated

battery situations and power delivery formulae that we don't understand, peak combined power at any given configuration will be around 400bhp. Still, that's a massive number for a luxo-berge, and you know how immediate electric power is. Could this be enough to worry the M3? It'll be fun finding out...



The 508 Sport Engineered Concept is as nice on the inside...



... as it is on the outside

Appreciating Depreciation **BMW 335i (E92)**

Then: **£42,000**
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The 335i is a hell of a mover. Its 3.0-litre turbo straight-six gives you 302bhp right out of the box, backed up by 295lb.ft of torque, and they're decent numbers in anybody's book. 0-62mph is despatched in 5.4-seconds, and the swoopy coupé body will fool most uninformed observers into thinking that it's an M3 that's just disappeared improbably quickly towards the horizon. You'll find that the cheaper cars will probably have the automatic gearbox but we'd recommend finding a manual, which feels proper, and on the move

the 335i pulls off a clever trick: its 295lb.ft of torque is an identical figure to the M3's, but it's all available from just 1,200rpm – which is a full 2,600rpm lower than the M3. What this means in real terms is that the 335i makes a devastating job of smearing the scenery without ever leaving you thinking, 'Oh, I wish I'd gone for the M3'. The steering is fluid and gorgeously feel-some without being overly assisted, the brakes are reassuringly progressive without biting too hard and jerking your passengers around, and the chassis does



Top 5 mods: ▲
Burger Tuning JB4, VRSF catless downpipes, Air Lift suspension, Injen dual cone intake, Mishimoto intercooler

out plenty of grip while leaving the handling pleasantly neutral. That's why you didn't buy the M3. Because the 335i is far more civilised. And look, they're less than an eighth of the price they were a decade ago. Go get the cheque book out.

OUR TOP 3 BMW E92S



1) Hoho Chan's 330D
We love the M2-style front bumper on this 3 Series that was featured back in Spring 2018. This car also ran Air Lift suspension that helped the BBS RS11 splits produce a killer stance.



2) AzRiz's 330D
Featured back in our Spring 2017 issue, Az's E92 boasted WORK VS-XX rims, Air Lift suspension (with amazing hard line install), widened rear arches and some tasty carbon details.



3) Slim Jules' 335i
The editor has had his E92 for over 4-years and in that time it's had quite the makeover, including Air Lift suspension, a Frozen Grey respray and a power hike to 450bhp.



SURREY TUNERS BUILD A SINGER-STYLE FERRARI 348, AND IT TOTALLY ROCKS



Yup, we want one too!

Premium restomodding is big business these days, as you've no doubt spotted. Niche reimagined classics like the Eagle E-Type and Alfaholics GTA have been making nerds salivate for a while, but the colossal PR machine around Singer and their 'Reimagined' 911s has forced the idea of premium modernised restoration into the consciousness of petrolheads the world over. And with a boxfresh Ferrari tribute, Surrey-based independents Evoluto Automobili have stepped up to the plate. As you can see, this thing looks jaw-droppingly delicious;

the concept is to take a 348 (not traditionally the most sought-after Ferrari in collector circles), and rebody it in carbon fibre to look like a sort of modern interpretation of a 355. Because people prefer the 355, even if it can't keep up with an Aston DB6 (That's a GoldenEye reference, kids...). They then fit a 500bhp nat-asp V8 with revs for days, mated to the iconic open-gate manual, and trim the weight down to a feather-light 1,000kg. What's not to like? So how much will it cost? Well, if you have to ask, you definitely can't afford it.



BREXIT CONTINUES TO MAKE THINGS QUITE CONFUSING



We're a modified car mag, so we like to keep politically neutral (and frankly we'd rather be watching old Top Gear reruns than Question Time anyway...). But you've probably noticed that, whatever your views on leaving or staying in the EU, it's making a lot of things pretty complicated, and that extends to driving too. If you're planning a Euro road trip this summer, or you have your sights set on Worthersee or Ahoy 100% Tuning or Le Mans, you might want to do your research before you set off. Most insurers have agreed

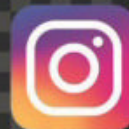
to continue the standard 90-day European cover, but you'll need to check with yours to be totally sure – and you'll also need to get a European Green Card as proof of domestic cover. These are free from your insurer, but you'll need to ask in plenty of time as the demand will be massive and there's no system in place yet to properly distribute them. So plan ahead! It's also worth noting that a lot of European cities have a low-emission zone that, depending on your car, might not let you in. You can check that out at green-zones.eu.



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300... IS THE MAGIC NUMBER

There was a time when 200mph was the holy grail figure for supercars, but now you can achieve those speeds in more new cars than it's possible to count – including quite a few four-door saloons! So these days 300mph is the figure that's keeping the mad scientists up at night... and Koenigsegg reckon they may have cracked it. The outrageous new Jesko hypercar is a track-focused monster, unveiled at the Geneva Motor Show as the replacement for the Agera RS. It's got a 5.0-litre twin-turbo V8 and these turbos are pre-spoiled by a clever air recirculation system – which completely eliminates lag – mated to a proprietary 9-speed transmission. The baseline power figure is 1,262bhp, which rises to 1,578bhp when you fill the tank with E85, and Koenigsegg reckon 300mph is a realistic claim. The future is here. And apparently the future isn't clever hybrids, it's sodding great V8s. Great news.



THE ANGRY MAN

**Ever owned a VAG car?
You'll be familiar with the
'£60-light', then.**

Stupid bloody thing, the engine warning light on the dash pops up all the time for all sorts of rubbish reasons; there's never any logic to it. If you're going to daily a Golf, Octavia, Leon, Passat, Polo, TT, A3, or anything else in the group, you're going to have to invest in a code-reader of your own, because otherwise you'll get to know your local garage really well. "Hello, me again, there's something wrong with my car." "Engine warning light again?" "Yep." [wait five minutes while they plug it into the machine.] "Yeah, it's just phantom codes, we've cleared them. That'll be £60 please." For fuck's sake, c'mon.

But that's not the end of it! No, if something like a momentary emissions blip triggers your EML, and you clear the code with your handset, you can be damn sure it'll pop back again in a couple of weeks' time. Or sometimes your reader will tell you that there is no fault, despite the light glaring out at you like some malicious gleaming bastard, so you'll have to take it back to the garage and find that actually VAG have a whole load of secret codes that are hidden in the background and you need a new bastard charcoal filter or something.

You know what's most annoying? The warning light can signify about five-hundred different things. It's not like having a gauge that says, 'This part's getting a bit hot', or a warning light with a symbol that tells you roughly what's wrong. No, the EML is a cop-out, a stupid little wishy-washy tosser that just whinges all the time, 'Ooh, something hurts, but I'm not telling you what it is'.

I've worked out a solution. Just put a bit of electrical tape over the light. If something's wrong with the car, you'll probably know about it sooner or later; you don't need a small illuminated picture of an engine to tell you. That bulb is a little piss-taker.

WHAT'S ON MAY 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5 5th May - Japfest - Silverstone	6 6th May - German Night - Ace Cafe	7	8	9	10	11
12th May - Early Edition - Sywell Aerodrome 12th May - Drag and Drift Thrash - Crail Raceway	13 13th May - Fueltopia - Ace Cafe	14	15	16th-17th May - London Motor Show - ExCel	17	18
19	20	21	22	23rd May - Ford Escort Night - Ace Cafe	24	25th May - Boss Cars Variety Show - Brooklands
26 26th May - Tora Tora Banzai - Crail Raceway	27	28 28th May - VAG Night - Ace Cafe	29	30	31	

WHAT'S ON TV: Car S.O.S. – Nat Geo HD – Thursdays • BTCC – Thruxton – ITV4 – 18th-19th May • Barcelona Grand Prix – Sky Sports F1 HD – 10th-12th May • Monte Carlo Grand Prix – Sky Sports F1 HD – 25-26th May • Top Gear repeats – Dave – relentlessly • Fast N' Loud – Discovery – on demand

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Tea Dance

Resplendent in Green Tea Metallic paint, Vince Knight's 504bhp wide-body S15 dances elegantly across the boundary between fiction and reality...

Words: **Dan Bevis** Photography: **Dave Cox**



“I was always in love with the S15 built by RAUH-Welt, and this was a big inspiration for my build”



The moments when art and life intersect are what give reality its true character. The flash in time when Neo sees the girl in the red dress in *The Matrix*, the interspersed subliminal images in *Fight Club*, the bits where they talk to camera in *Spaceballs*, there's a knowing acknowledgement of the link between fantasy and real life. This is true of videogame cars too: if you grew up playing *Outrun*, you'll always be excited by the sight of a Testarossa out in meatspace. Children of *Gran Turismo* get more excited by the Mazda Demio than normal people do.

What you're seeing here, then, is a real-world representation of a videogame car. Well, sort of. Vince Knight's scene-slaying S15 is a shimmering vision of *Need for Speed* fantasy – except that it's obviously not made of pixels. It's made of pure awesomeness.

STELLA PERFORMANCE

But before we delve into the gaming connection, let's

look at the original impetus for crafting this fabulous machine: RAUH-Welt. Now, for some it may seem a little jarring to see this iconic name plastered across the sunstrip of a Nissan. After all, this is a brand most commonly associated with widebody Porsches, right? You're certainly thinking along the correct lines, the back story is pretty interesting: Akira Nakai first came to automotive prominence on the drifting scene, as part of the Rough World drift crew. His satin black Toyota AE86 on gold Watanabes became an icon of the tuning world, and a chance encounter with a 911 in the late 1990s set his mental cogs whirring; a damaged 911 came into the bodyshop where he worked, and he immediately saw the potential – before long, he'd purchased his own 911, a 1985 930, and set about making it unique. That car, named 'Stella Artois', is the build that established Nakai-san in the modifying firmament; fusing the colour scheme of his drift AE86 with the ultra-wide-arch look he pioneered for the 911, it's become a legend. Ever since, he's become a tuning master for hand-crafted



THE PHOENIX

Vince is probably unique among Fast Car feature owners, in that he's only owned two cars by the age of 30. But both have been featured in these pages, which gives him a 100% hit rate – not bad, huh?

Vince's first car was an EK Civic, which ultimately ended up running a big-power K20 and such a fresh vibe that we put it on our cover back in 2011. Finished in Green Tea Metallic paint, it wasn't just a project, it was his baby and his daily. He'd always fancied the idea of an S15 though, and when the right car came up, the EK was broken for parts to fund the Nissan purchase. But the spirit of the old build rose from the flames and lives on in the new – Vince has painted the S15 in the same shade of Green Tea Metallic. "I just can't give up my love for this paint," he laughs.



widebody 911s. But with roots in drifting, he loves a hachi-roku or an S-chassis as much as any of us.

"I was always in love with the S15 built by RAUH-Welt, and this was a big inspiration for my build," Vince assures us. "I've only had two cars, my last being a Honda Civic EK that was on the cover of Fast Car in 2011. The Honda was my first car from the age of seventeen, but I always had a love for Silvias – I was just too young to afford one!" When the right S15 finally appeared for sale – a blue car over in Ireland, with stock engine and interior – it was duly shipped to Blighty so Vince could roll up his sleeves and get to work.

So what of this RAUH-Welt S15 he cites as inspiration? Ah, this is the stuff of tuning folklore... something crafted almost fifteen years ago now, with Nakai-san taking care of the aesthetics and the car's owner (and RAUH-Welt employee) Masuda-san reworking the oily bits into a street-legal track beast. The 400bhp SR20-engined rev-monster has become a sort of poster boy for how to do an S15 properly,

I spy with my little eye, something beginning with... 7Twenty



COVER CAR



with its focused mechanicals, subtly widened body and aggression in spades.

RAUH JUSTICE

Vince's car isn't a replica or a pastiche though, it's a loving tribute to a legend that employs plenty of his own ideas to ensure that it stands alone as a complete 2019 vision of what the S15 can achieve. For starters, you won't find an SR20 under the bonnet. No, he's swapped in an RB straight-six from the bigger-brother Skyline, which is a bold play in anyone's book. Specifically, it's an RB25NEO, the later variant of the 2.5, to which has been added a BorgWarner AirWerks S300SX turbo on a 6Boost T4 top-mount manifold, and that's a pretty forthright way to behave. You'll also find hugely upgraded fuelling courtesy of J's Garage 750cc injectors and Walbro 340 pump, working in harmony with a sodding great intercooler and numerous other tricks – it's all governed by a Link G4 ECU, tuned to deliver a reliable and super-strong 504bhp and 450lb. ft. Impressive stuff. Naturally it's running the RB25 transmission too, with a Nismo GT LSD Pro 2-way diff out back to allow those boisterous skids that Nakai-san would be so amused by. And the chassis? That's got playfulness for days, with MeisterR Zeta-CRD coilovers, adjustable tension rods, adjustable camber arms and adjustable rear toe arms – adjustability is very much the watchword, because when Vince does things he does them properly. This isn't a show queen, it's built to be driven daily.

"In 2015, film-maker and photographer Bryn Musselwhite got in touch saying Need For Speed were filming their cutscenes for the new game, and they

needed a RAUH-Welt-inspired S15," Vince recalls. "In the game, my car belongs to Amy, one of the main characters, as she builds it to impress Nakai-san. I got to meet Nakai-san during the shoot, and was given the thumbs-up from him to keep the sunstrip!" You see, this car is a bona fide videogame hero – when you see it in the rolling scenes that intersperse the gameplay, that's real-world Vince and virtual Amy working hand-in-hand. This isn't to say the car is happy to exist solely as a virtual showpiece, however. With the amount of work Vince has put into making it quick and agile, in tribute to the original RAUH-Welt S15's spirit, he's keen to use it at any and every opportunity.

"The car was built to be aggressive, but suitable for road use; low, but manageable for speed bumps; fast, but reliable, with a full interior," he explains. "I can hop in and drive four hours back to Devon without a worry, or a headache! Being my only car, its main use seems



Officially approved
Nakai-san sunstrip





Vertex Ridge rear bumper and arches



#Boost

OWNER PROFILE:

Name: Vince Knight

Age: 30

Occupation: Cinematographer
First car: Honda Civic EK (Fast Car front cover – May 2011!)

Favourite mod on your car:
The Vertex Ridge WideBody – this kit is the only one I like for S15s, it follows the stock lines and doesn't make the car look too modified. Park it next to a stock-body one though, and you realise how much wider it is!

Favourite show: Gumball 3000
Track day or show-and-shine?

Track day! I can barely be bothered to wash it let alone make it shine.

What's next? Maybe something American. I'll report back when it's green.



You can tell Vince takes Bride in his work (sorry, I'll get my coat)





Amusement? Definitely

to be when I need to get around London – you’ll find me stuck in traffic, lugging camera equipment in the boot...! I can’t make a journey without people taking interest, it’s not the sort of thing you often see about in London, I think. It’s constantly dying to stretch its legs though, so when there’s the opportunity it does! In 2016 I took it on the Gumball 3000 to Romania and back and it didn’t skip a beat – showing up some of the supercars along the way.”

As a cinematographer for film and TV, it was perhaps inevitable that Vince would create a car which so brazenly embraces the ties between fiction and reality, and the results are truly startling. It’s a knowing wink to the camera, an ‘A113’ reference in a Pixar movie, a barnstorming final scene with one eye on the wrap party. This subtly wide-bodied and amusingly powerful S15 is a bona fide videogame car that you’ll find crawling down the Kings Road. And then, like Keyser Söze – whoof! – Vince is gone. ■

TECH SPEC: NISSAN SILVIA S15

STYLING:

Green Tea Metallic, Vertex Ridge WideBody (bumpers, sidekirts, front wings, rear arches), Origin Lab roof spoiler, SuperMade boot spoiler, 50/50 taillights, Nismo smoked side repeaters, Nissan wind deflectors

TUNING:

RB25NEO 2.5-litre straight-six, BorgWarner AirWerks S300SX 83/75 .88 turbo, 6Boost T4 top-mount manifold, Turbosmart Hyper-Gate45 wastegate, J’s Garage 3in downpipe and exhaust system, front-facing intake manifold, J’s Garage 750cc injectors, Walbro 340 fuel pump, J’s Garage twin-core twin-pass tucked radiator, large front-mount intercooler, J’s Garage custom intercooler piping, engine bay tucked and painted pink, relocated fusebox, relocated battery, Link G4 ECU, RB25 Spec 2 gearbox, Stage 4 Competition Clutch, Nismo GT LSD Pro 2-way differential

POWER:

504bhp, 450lb.ft

CHASSIS:

10.5x18in ET15 7Twenty Style49 wheels, 235/40 Nankang NS-II tyres, MeisterR Zeta-CRD coilovers, adjustable tension rods, adjustable camber arms, adjustable rear toe arms, JIC boot brace, EBC drilled and grooved discs, EBC Yellowstuff pads, braided brake lines

INTERIOR:

Bride Gias Low Max seats, Bride Gradation doorcards, Bride Gradation gearstick gaiter, carbon fibre centre console, Nismo Combination Meter gauge cluster, AEM wideband gauge, Defi boost gauge

THANKS:

“Built by Richards Racing, engine supplied by JDM Garage, fabrication and tuning by J’s Garage, bodywork by Lewis Bustin.”



The RB25 kicks out an impressive 504bhp



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TOP 10 KEI CARS

The automotive world is shifting so rapidly these days in terms of regulations, it's hard to keep up. We've got news reports about mooted speed limiters being fitted to new cars just a few years from now, countries setting dates to phase out the internal combustion engine as we know it, legislators racing to catch up with autonomous technology... and population dynamics are dictating car design, format and layout too. Over in Japan, the kei car genre (short for keijidōsha, meaning simply 'light automobile') works to strict regs governing maximum vehicle size, engine size and power output. But wait – this is no modern phenomenon! No, kei cars were first introduced in 1949, to boost the car industry in a post-war economy when most people could only afford motorbikes. The so-called 360cc era lasted until 1975, when the rules changed

to allow 550cc motors. This went on until 1990, when the kei cars that most of us now know came onto the scene: the 660cc era spanned 1990-2013, at which point the Japanese government significantly reduced the incentives of kei ownership. The 660cc era, then, is the golden age of kei cars – the regulations demanded a power cap of 64bhp, with cars being no more than 3,490mm long and 1,490mm wide, and the designers went wild to make their individual interpretations of the identical dimensional format stand out. This led to some pretty funky cars, and we've pulled together our Top Ten of the 660cc era (and a little beyond) so you can see just how diverse the wacky kei car field is. Pack your smallest picnic basket and bring no more than two cassette tapes... we're going cruising through the city in a zany little buzzbox!

Autozam AZ-1

What happens when you take a gullwinged supercar and scale it down to Hot Wheels size? You get an Autozam AZ-1, that's what – perhaps one of the most insane cars ever to come out of Japan. Manufactured by Suzuki (and then, slightly confusingly, officially sold by Mazda), this was a mid-engined kei sports car that was actually largely engineered in the UK. Sadly it was launched at the wrong time – Japan was in the midst of a recession, and the AZ-1 was markedly more expensive than the poster-boy sport-keis, the Suzuki Cappuccino and Honda Beat; the Autozam dealer network had difficulty shifting them, and fewer than 4,500 were built (compared to over 28,000 Cappuccinos and 33,000 Beats). We're so glad it exists though. Just look at it. What a completely mad car.

PRICE TODAY: £12,000

TOP 3 MODS: Mazdaspeed bodykit, RAYS 3-spoke wheels, M2 1015 twin-foglight bonnet



TOP 10 K CARS

Daihatsu Cuore Avanzato TR-XX R4

The Daihatsu Mira range has been around since the early 1980s, badged variously as the Cuore, Domino and Charade just to confuse people. As are the core values of kei cars, it's always been a teeny-tiny thing, and from the first-generation there have always been two engine options available – 660cc for the Japanese domestic market, and something a little larger for export markets. The L500 series, introduced in 1994, is the one we're interested in here, as it heralded the arrival of possibly the most sarcastically long name imaginable for such a tiny car: the Cuore Avanzato TR-XX R4. This little pocket rocket sported the obligatory 660c motor, but the engineers got a little bit mischievous with the spec and decided to throw in a turbo and intercooler just for the hell of it. The little motor was already pretty peppy, being a low-inertia 16v twin-cam four-pot that redlines at a howling 8,500rpm, and officially all of this forced induction chicanery still results in the regulation-mandated 64bhp... but we've heard it's more like 80bhp+! The TR-XX R4 also has four-wheel drive, for no real reason other than to make it more awesome, and it'll do 0-62mph in around 8.5 seconds.

Imports will generally be badged as 'Mira Avanzato', but 100 Cuores in this spec were officially brought to the UK in full UKDM spec – 80 for sale to the public, and 20 to Harry Hockly Motorsport for competition purposes. Yep, it's not just a bonkers kei car, it's a full-fat race car!

With its pumped-up bodywork and snorting bonnet vent, the Avanzato TR-XX R4 is basically an Impreza turbo that got shrunk in the wash, and you'll never tire of blowing away execs in Audi TDIs at the lights. Given that kei cars are supposed to be frugal and simple city runabouts, there's absolutely no reason for the Cuore to be turbocharged or 4WD, which is exactly what makes this silly little car so awesome. We want one.

PRICE TODAY: £2,500

TOP 3 MODS: HKS induction kit, Toyota Starlet Glanza V top-mount intercooler, Toyo R888s



Caterham 7 160

OK, we're cheating a bit here – but not really. You see, the Caterham 7 is pretty much the only non-Japanese car that's small enough to be officially accepted as a kei car in Japan and, while the 160-spec car exceeds the official 64bhp power limit (it has 79bhp), it's imported in small numbers and allowed to slip the net. None of this is accidental, as Caterham use a Suzuki 660cc three-cylinder turbo engine in the 160, and it's a perfect fit for the car – we may have seen some monstrously powerful 7s emerge in recent years, but this classic is really all about the chassis and, with skinny 155-section tyres, the 160bhp-per-tonne power-to-weight ratio and slippery tail makes it pretty

playful. The ultimate kei car, then? Well, it's not Japanese so it probably shouldn't count – but it meets every single other criteria, and it's a lot more fun to drive than a Suzuki Carry van.

PRICE TODAY: £17,000

TOP 3 MODS: Carbon fibre arches, Tillett seats, HKS SSQV blow-off valve

Honda N-BOX

You know what you're getting with an N-BOX. It's right there in the name. Honda traditionally used the N- prefix for sports car in the 1960s and 1970s, so you know it's going to be something with a bit of character, and 'BOX' – well, it's shaped like a box, isn't it? Obvious.

The shape of the car maximises its footprint to an absurd degree – it's literally as big as it's possible to make a car with these length and width dimensions without making it look like Kid 'N' Play's hair, and the body design is a sort of scaled-down people carrier with just enough retro touches to make it cute. The interior, on the other hand, is full of circles – round vents, round dial surrounds, round speakers, round everything – which isn't very boxy at all. There's an engine



start button, a sodding great subwoofer mounted in the dash, and the rear seats fold completely flat to turn it into a double bed for short people. What more could you want from a car?

PRICE TODAY: £4,000

TOP 3 MODS: Cusco coilovers, takeyari exhaust, posh interior retrim



Daihatsu Hijet

The Daihatsu Hijet has been around for ten generations since 1961, it's the archetypal kei truck. We love the slightly ridiculous look of the 4th and 5th generation versions from the 1970s, as they have permanently surprised faces that make them appear like a proctologist has slipped a cold finger in unannounced, but we reckon the best of them all is the 6th-gen model built from 1981-86. It was such a popular format that Daihatsu continued building them right up until 2002 in China; it's got a high roof and a flat floor, with a surprisingly big load bed and 4WD – and, thanks to confusing regulations for commercial kei vehicles that no-one really understands, it's got a whole bunch of engine options; a 547cc twin-cylinder turbo, an 843cc triple, and even a one-litre. There were loads of variants too – the Hijet Jumbo had a much bigger cab for extra passengers, and the Hijet Climber came with huge knobby tyres and an LSD! Oh, and they're all mid-engined too, so they're basically baby Ferraris.

PRICE TODAY: £1,500

TOP 3 MODS: Bags of cement, string vest, loads of empty Golden Virginia packets



Image by order_242 (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Subaru Sambar

Some Japanese oddballs find themselves becoming unlikely heroes in the UK, and end up getting imported in improbably large numbers. The Nissan Figaro, for example – that's become a real retro city car icon, while the Micra-based Mitsuoka Viewt carries a certain kitschy charm too. So why has the 5th-generation Subaru Sambar become so popular, why should we so readily embrace an unremarkable 1990s kei microvan? Well, for the simple reason that there are companies who sell conversion kits to make them look like baby VW splitscreen campervans, and a lot of people seem to really like this idea. Yes, it's wilfully silly, but that's kei culture all over – and hey, they're a hell of a lot cheaper than an actual VW camper and, to be fair, probably not quite as slow. The Sambar could be specced with an optional supercharger too, for some reason. We're not going to argue.

PRICE TODAY: £5,000

TOP 3 MODS: VW camper styling, floral curtains, OEM supercharger option



Daihatsu Copen

The Daihatsu Copen launched in 2002, with a 660cc turbo motor in Japan and a slightly more powerful 1.3-litre non-turbo in other markets. Insurance costs are roughly the same, but the 1.3 non-turbo is a whole two seconds quicker to 60mph, so that's worth bearing in mind...

It's an undeniably stylish little car, looking like an Audi TT that's been shrunk down to two-thirds its size and redrawn by a child. The interior's a riot of colourful accents and shapes, and you even get a MOMO steering wheel and stainless gearknob. They've always been well served by the aftermarket, but all bets were off with the second-gen car that launched in 2014, as Liberty Walk decided to get in on the action and design a widebody kit for it. That actually happened. It looks mental, in the best possible way.

PRICE TODAY: £3,000 (first gen)

TOP 3 MODS: Liberty Walk kit, HKS DX Sports turbo, BC Racing coilovers



Suzuki Hustler

There aren't many cars named after porn mags, are there? Except the Honda Jazz, perhaps, and the Mazda Bongo. And the Subaru MILFs Gone Wild (Although we might have imagined that one.). The Suzuki Hustler isn't a sleazy thing, though – it's actually pretty cute, with wide innocent eyes and an up-and-at-'em stance. On sale since 2014, its USP is its lifestyle element; Suzuki can sell you a special tent that clips to the open tailgate so you can take it camping, and if you tick the right option boxes you can have a turbo and 4WD so it'll drive really fast across sandy beaches. In fact, the 4WD isn't just a gimmick – it's got hill descent and grip control and all sorts... what you're looking at here is a baby Range Rover. And look how cute it is!

PRICE TODAY: £8,000

TOP 3 MODS: Lift kit, knobbly tyres, snorkel



Honda S660

A lot of kei vehicles pay lip service to being sports cars, but the Honda S660 is the real deal. Launched in 2015, this is a pukka mid-engined roadster that looks a bit like a scaled-down NSX. It has a decent 45/55 weight distribution and a proper manual gearbox (although you can also spec a paddle-shift CVT), as well as a pretty sorted chassis, and it's one of the few kei cars that doesn't spend its time banging the small-car drum: whereas most motors in this realm look deliberately odd so that it's immediately obvious you're looking at a kei car, the S660 just looks like an actual sports car that's quite far away. And if that 64bhp doesn't sound enough for you, HKS will happily bolt on a bigger turbo to give you over 100bhp – which, in a car weighing 800kg, is plenty to have fun with.

PRICE TODAY: £12,000

TOP 3 MODS: HKS turbo, Mugen bodykit, Spoon N1 exhaust



Suzuki Alto Turbo RS

The terms 'Turbo' and 'RS' are always going to get UK car enthusiasts a little fired up, but what you're looking at here is no retro boosted Dagenham boy-racer. It does share a bit of its aggression though, particularly around the eyes – remember when everyone was fitting bad-boy bonnets to their Escorts to make the eyes squint? Suzuki have essentially done that for you with the Alto Turbo RS. Look at its angry little face. Ooh, it's all cross.

Alright, it's hardly going to give an old-school RS Turbo a run for its money, given that it's officially hampered by that mandated 64bhp figure (although we know how much Japanese manufacturers like to lie about power figures, so who knows?), and unfortunately you'll have to make do with an automatic gearbox as there's no proper manual available, but still... just look at it! How can you not fall for its charms, it looks like a really annoyed toaster. With the wheels pushed right to the corners it handles like a little champ too, and it comes with decent bucket seats and darty steering. The 17-inch wheels make it look a bit like a cartoon, and you've got the choice of 2WD or 4WD – even with the latter it only weighs 720kg (the 2WD is just 670kg!), so you can properly chuck it about.

Previous generations of the Alto have usually offered a 'Works' spec level which feature ostentatious bodykits and peppy performance, and the Turbo RS carries on this line with panache. Sadly they were never officially sold in Europe, although your friendly neighbourhood importer can help you with that. It's worth it just for the pub-bragging amusement of telling people you have an RS Turbo, then showing them the Alto simply to enjoy the looks on their faces. It's simultaneously cute and scary, like a kitten with rabies.

PRICE TODAY: £9,700 (in Japan)

TOP 3 MODS: HKS exhaust, Tein coilovers, race car wrap






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MAZDA FD RX-7

THIS IS AMERICA



Boasting an insane 1200whp race-spec V8 to back up its unforgettable Rocket Bunny aesthetics, Sam Morris' SEMA-winning RX-7 is all the proof you'll need that the guys stateside do it best...

Words: **Sam Preston** Photography: **Mike Kuhn**



HOT RIDE



February 2004. An adolescent Sam Morris finishes another day at his Kansas high school and heads straight to the newsagent across the road to grab the latest issue of his favourite Japanese car tuner magazine.

Gracing the cover of this issue is a bright red FD Mazda RX-7 with all the trimmings; its boosted rotary motor benefiting from the latest offerings from Nitrous Express and meaning the car would feature on the firm's stand at the prestigious Vegas-based SEMA show later that year.

Connecting with this stunning coupé in a way he'd never done so before with any other car, an amazing set of circumstances meant that just a couple of years later, Sam was lucky enough to become the proud owner of that very same Mazda. By this stage, it was nothing more than a rolling shell. So, the following 13 years were focused on revitalising this icon to ensure that it would one day be special enough to show off within SEMA's capacious halls once again.

And we're pleased to report that Sam has stuck to his promise religiously, with the car not only attending SEMA recently, but bringing home a 'Car of the Show' award while it was there. And once you trawl through the insane amount of work that he's performed to this absolute stunner, you'll soon realise why...

FAB-CREATION

The co-founder of Florida-based Gooichi Motors (alongside his partner, Sabrina) – a high-end fabrication company that focuses on bespoke, show-stopping motorcycle and car fabrication work – Sam's natural talent that can be witnessed on countless satisfied customers' builds was also applied to his very own RX-7 project, too.

"I wanted to develop a raw street car... something on the verge of insanity that would see everything being purpose-built with one aim in mind: to be driven hard on the road," he recalls, explaining how virtually no part of the RX's previous form was transferred over as he started the overhaul completely from scratch.

The most important aspect from the start was to make sure that, regardless of how pretty this oriental sports



car ended up looking, it would always have an equally as impressive amount of drivability to back it up – a thoroughly no-holds-barred approach that the US tuning scene in particular has become famous for in the last few decades.

"It was pretty ratty when I picked it up; the bodywork sported four different colours and a completely gutted interior," Sam continues, revealing that one of the first tasks on the list was to swap out that tired 13B Wankel engine in replacement of something a little meatier. "I picked up the LS motor that's still in the car for \$75! Back then, it was a basic standard unit that we simply added a small turbocharger onto. It's developed a bit since..."

It might be a hugely popular (if a little controversial) swap for RX-7s these days, but back when he performed this GM-derived V8 conversion, Sam's car was something of a revolution amongst tuning circles. And to make sure it's remained at the bleeding edge of what's physically possible with these cars, the upgrade process has been a constant evolution process ever since, now resulting in the mother of all power plants being on-hand under that long bonnet.

Beginning by forging and stroking the internals and offering up Dart LS3 cylinder heads, complete with Gooichi





“We reached 880whp on its break-in tune at 13psi”

Motors' bespoke valve and cam profiles, a monster 88mm Comp Turbo CT6 turbocharger now supplies the boost, along with twin Turbosmart wastegates. Running on E85 fuel and with a Devilsown methanol injection system also present, the immaculately-executed job has already yielded some pretty savage results...

"A few weeks ago we went on the dyno, where we reached 880whp on its break-in tune at 13psi," says Sam casually as he drops this ballistic figure into our conversation. "We're planning on pushing it to 25psi, so it should make 1200whp when turned up... completely unnecessary for street or track use, but this is America... What can I say?!"

Despite the monstrous performance capable from that V8, Sam has been keen to ensure his RX-7 has remained fully driveable throughout its transformation, as to him, this has always been far more of a fun street machine than a clinical show car trailer queen. It's probably why you'll find an incredibly sumptuous Spec-25 straight-cut manual gearbox attached to the engine now – a seriously satisfying cog-shifter that's also more than up to the job of handling all that grunt (thankfully!).





THE 'NUTTY' LOOK

With everything mounted up to the humble coupé in a completely unforgiving, solid fashion (with Sam utilising bespoke Gooichi Motors' engine and transmission crossmembers), as well as adding one of TEIN's range-topping sets of coilovers dialled in to their ultimate track-demolishing setting, Sam's Mazda was soon becoming

something of a mythical beast within RX-7 communities, even if it was still sporting a slightly mismatched and ropey aesthetic at this stage. That, too, was set to change before long, though...

"It was looking pretty rough, but had a solid turbo motor and was originally just built to shred tyres in!" Sam grins. "But then we got the opportunity to show it off at SEMA on the AutoMeter stand, so it was time for a complete rebuild." Because, in a satisfyingly full-circle twist of fate, Sam was eventually given the chance to live out the same journey with this car that had made him fall in love with it in the first place all those years ago. And it wasn't an opportunity he was going to take lightly.

"I wanted to showcase Gooichi Motors' levels of design and fabrication work by putting in the same level of detail as we do with all of our customer builds," he explains, meaning it was likely there was going to be some seriously bespoke fabrication work performed to the RX-7 before too long to make it stand out from the crowd even more.

The result is one of the most brutal and functional yet stunning examples of this car to ever grace this planet: now boasting the likes of a Rocket Bunny kit, that striking 'Pistachio' paint job and Lexan windows, as well as countless custom touches from the Gooichi team to fully ensure there would be no passers-by at the SEMA show that wouldn't stop dead in their tracks upon first sight of it. These include those trick LED front and rear lights that both look like they've been completely blanked-out in a race car-style fashion at first glance.

To fill those new curves, some retro German-inspired Fifteen52 split rims now sit proudly under each corner,



Gooichi Motors CT6 turbocharger kit with Turbosmart blow-off valve/wastegates



This thing is capable of churning out a whopping 1200whp



Perfection defined

SPARSE CLASS

Have you ever seen a race-focused cockpit that's quite as downright suave and sophisticated as this? Reflecting Sam's infamous levels of attention-to-detail, the gutted innards are a seamless mix of painted bare metal, billet aluminium and carbon fibre, that just like the rest of the car, not only look great but offer up an epic level of functionality to boot.

Highlights include the custom Gooichi Motors roll cage, as well as those ultra-light Tecnocraft carbon fibre seats. The Bubbletech carbon fibre dashboard up front houses delicious Gooichi Motors billet switchgear, as well as the trick AutoMeter screen behind the steering wheel that shows off all of the car's parameters in the very neatest format possible.

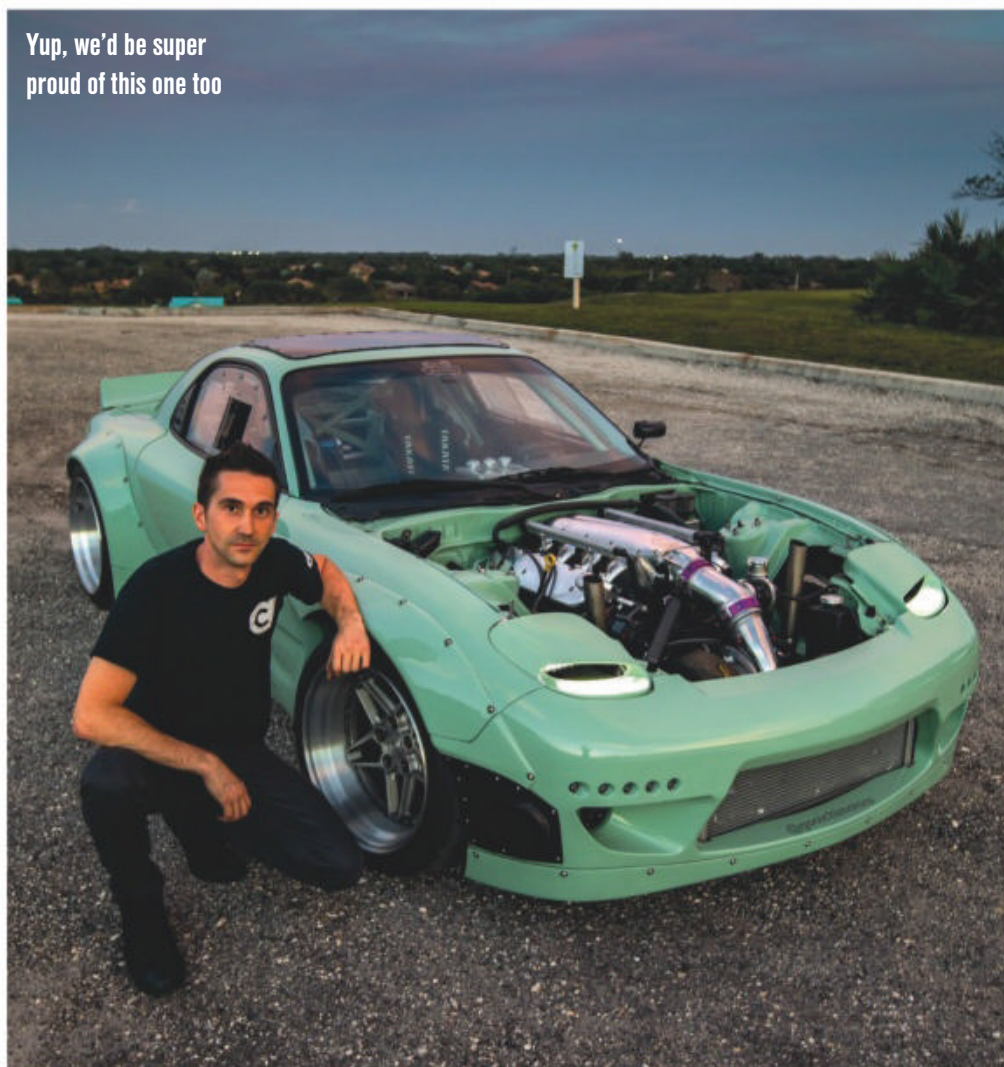


Now, that's a shifter

HOT RIDE



Yup, we'd be super proud of this one too



coming in at an insane 14in wide at the rear and ensuring some serious Nitto rubber is required to successfully wrap around them. With hefty Wilwood stoppers tucked away underneath, this is one machine that successfully strikes the perfect balance between looking equally as ready to hit a show or the race track.

With an interior that offers similar levels of OCD-fuelled clinical perfection as the rest of the build, it's little wonder Sam walked away with a 'Best in Show' trophy after a week of breaking necks at the Vegas-based super-event. But now he's stormed the show scene, he's ready to once again begin using his RX-7 for what it was always intended for... "It's getting torn down very soon for some new, functional aero to be applied, as we're about to hit the track in a serious way!" ■



TECH SPEC: MAZDA FD RX-7

STYLING

Full re-spray in custom 'Pistachio' green; Full Rocket Bunny wide-arch body kit (comprising front bumper with DRLs, rear bumper, wide arches with blended side skirts and ducktail-style rear spoiler); HotWater Labs fixed headlight covers with custom LED bar headlights; Gooichi Motors full digital LED tail lights; APR carbon fibre wing mirrors; carbon fibre sunroof cover; Aerocatch bonnet pins; Bubbletech Lexan door windows with sliding hatches.

TUNING

6.7-litre '408 LQ9' stroker GM LS1 V8 turbo engine conversion; fully forged rotating assembly; Dart LS3 cylinder heads; custom-spec Gooichi Motors valvetrain and camshaft design; Gooichi Motors turbocharger kit (comprising 88mm Comp CT6 turbo, Turbosmart blow-off valve/wastegates and Gooichi Motors titanium up-pipe); KRC CT525 accessories; Shaun's Custom Alloy inlet manifold and billet valve covers; titanium downpipe and wastegate dumps; Ron Davis custom radiator; 2200cc Siemens Deka fuel injectors; custom catch can and methanol tank; Devilsown direct-port methanol injection system; Accusump oil system; Haltech EMS ECU and terminated harness; SmartEFI full MIL-spec wiring harness and Smartwire system; Braille B128L lithium-ion battery with Gooichi Motors billet battery tray; Spec-25 Muncie straight-cut four-speed manual gearbox; Exedy triple-disc carbon clutch; Gooichi Motors solid axle conversion; Strange centre section; Detroit 8.8 Locker LSD.

CHASSIS

10.5x18in (front) and 14x18in (rear) Fifteen52 Bergmeister forged three-piece alloy wheels; Nitto NT01 tyres; Tikore titanium wheel nuts; Gooichi Motors engine and transmission crossmembers; TEIN Circuit Master Pro coilovers; Tanabe swaybars; Wilwood 365mm brake kit (front); Wilwood 223mm brake kit (rear); Wilwood pedal assembly; full ABS delete; stainless brake lines; line lock; Gooichi Motors custom brake reservoirs.

INTERIOR

Fully stripped and colour-coded cabin; full Gooichi Motors colour-coded roll cage; Tecnocraft carbon fibre fixed-back bucket seats with Takata 6-point harnesses; MOMO Mod. 08 steering wheel; Gooichi Motors 'Boss' gear lever with Longacre gear knob; Bubbletech carbon fibre dashboard; Gooichi Motors switch panel and billet surround trim; Stack gauges; AutoMeter LCD display; carbon fibre door cards; carbon fibre boot cover; custom fuel cell; Lizard Skin ceramic and sound-deadening coatings on floor.

SHOUT

To my love, Sabrina – without her none of this would have been possible; my friends and family; my sponsors: AutoMeter; Comp Turbo; MOMO; Braille Battery; Fifteen52; SmartEFI; Turbosmart; BYC Designs; Devilsown; Ticon; Tecnocraft; Bubbletech; Shaun's Custom Alloy and Nitto Tires.



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Prices from £1199



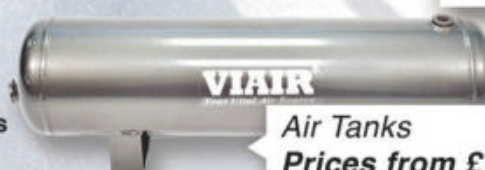
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Firestone



FRESH KIT

RADI8 R8HS9, from £TBA

It's a strange one, this rather epic new design from Radi8. On one hand it's absolute insanity, precisely as mad as those lunatics you see staggering around shouting at traffic. On the other though, it manages to look all refined and distinctly classic, all at the same time. In other words, you're looking at the holy grail of wheel design here, a trick that's almost impossible to pull off. But they've managed it, the R8HS9 is a proper gem, a stand out masterpiece in a world where many wheels tend to follow an established, or at least a very similar, look. There's none of that playing it safe rubbish here. There really is nothing else quite like it.

Anyway, they're not messing about with rolling out the options on this one either. These are already available in 2-piece and forged monoblocks, and there's also a few more budget-conscious 19- and 20-inch cast versions due to land in June. Although we will say that, if you fancy a set of those (which clearly, we all do), you'd better get your pre-orders in a bit sharpish. We can see these flying out the door at



quite a rate over the summer. Still, if there's one thing to be said about the wheel world it's that it needs more of this kind of thinking. There's no holding back if you want to make a real splash. And a complete lack of restraint is something that Radi8 always do impeccably.

One thing is for sure. Fortune always seems to favour the bonkers!

www.radi8wheels.com

FAST FACTS

- **Sizes:** Any 17-22 diameters, any width (forged), 8.5 and 10x19, 10x20 (cast)
- **Offsets:** Any (forged), TBC (cast)
- **PCDs:** Any (forged), 5x100, 5x108, 5x112, 5x115, 5x120 (cast)
- **Finishes:** Hypersilver, Dark Mist (cast) and extra custom finishes (forged)

FRESH KIT

NEW PRODUCTS

The shiniest and freshest mods on the market

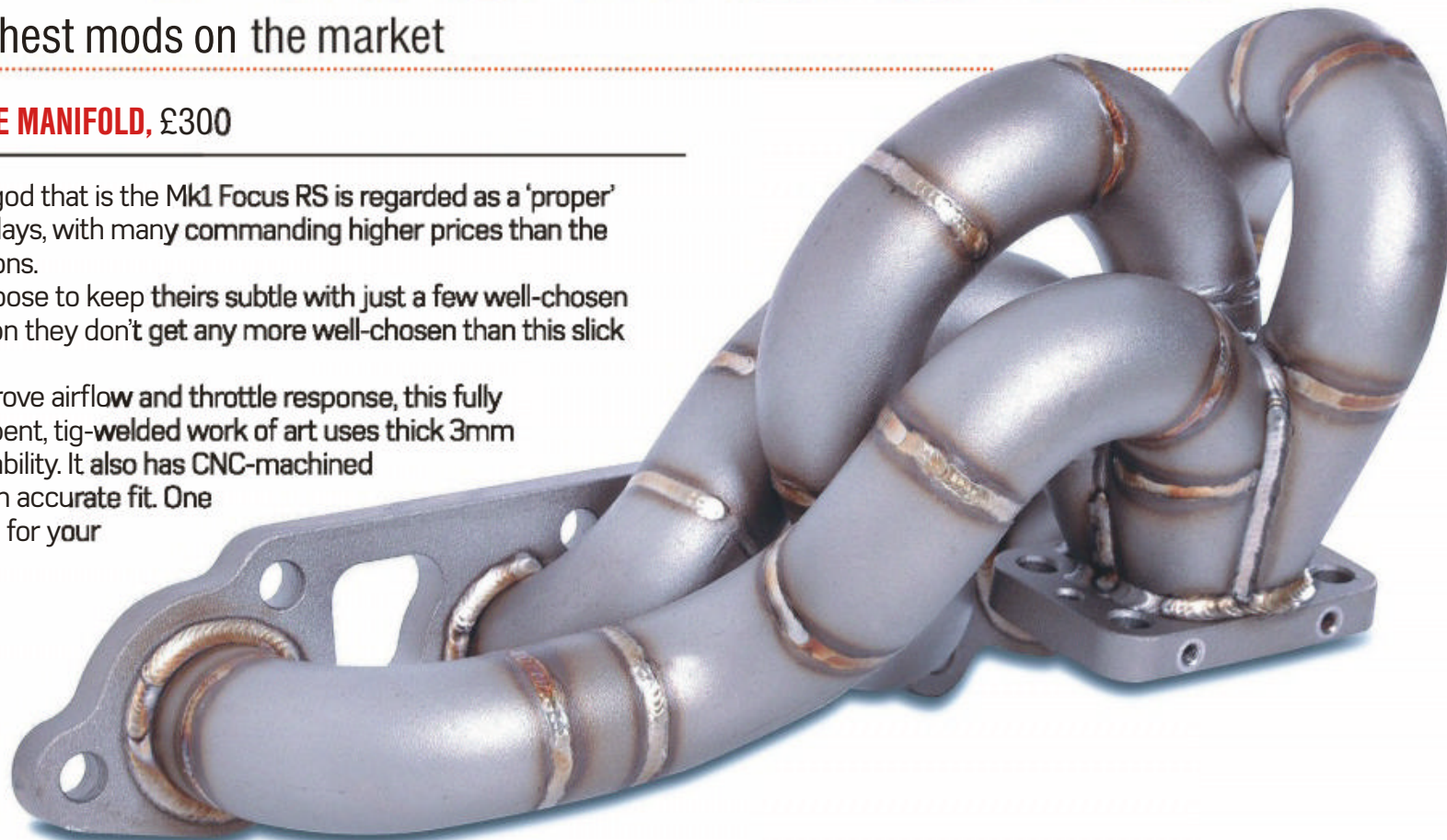
DIRENZA MK1 FOCUS RS RACE MANIFOLD, £300

The Imperial Blue automotive god that is the Mk1 Focus RS is regarded as a 'proper' flat-cap modern classic nowadays, with many commanding higher prices than the completely bonkers Mk2 versions.

With that in mind, many choose to keep theirs subtle with just a few well-chosen tuning upgrades. And we reckon they don't get any more well-chosen than this slick race manifold.

Designed to massively improve airflow and throttle response, this fully ported and polished, mandrel bent, tig-welded work of art uses thick 3mm stainless steel for superior reliability. It also has CNC-machined flanges for solid support and an accurate fit. One for when only the finest will do for your pampered project.

www.direnza.co.uk



TOP ✂️ TOOL

POWERFLEX BMW/MINI JACKING POINT ADAPTORS, £12

These well-engineered little work of genius could get you out of trouble if you're rolling around in a BMW or MINI, simply because they all but eliminate the chance of damaging the sills when jacking, or dropping the car on your jack.

Many modern Bavarian bruisers come with rather awkward jacking points, ones which require the jack to slide into a special factory indent. These adaptors convert your normal jack to locate properly, providing a stable and safe lift. In other words, these could quite literally make the difference between life and death. Oh yeah, they also fit many a Rolls-Royce too. Which is handy. We've lost count of the times we've had to jack up a stranded Phantom!

www.powerflex.co.uk

Big Ass Hoops – it's time to fill those arches!

Dare F7, from £569 (set)

The first commandment in the modified car Bible is that you should never underestimate a simple 5-spoke's ability to look stunning on absolutely anything. Whether that's the reasoning behind the new Dare F7 or not we haven't been told, but in all its subtle satin-black glory, we can't help thinking there's not a car in the land that these wouldn't enhance nicely. Of course, they only come in PCDs suited to larger motors of the Germanic persuasion, but that's why God invented adaptors, right? Simple, stunning and well-priced. Top bombing.

www.daremotorsport.com

Sizes: 8 and 9x18, 8.5 and 9.5x19

PCDs: 5x100, 5x120, 5x112

Offset: ET16-20

Finishes: Satin black/machined lip



Rotiform OSR, from £840 (each)

The OSR has landed, people, and what a proper stunner this puppy really is! We love the design, we love the fact these are custom-built for your car in the USA and we love that they come in the option of 2- or 3-piece splitties, or a monstrous monoblock. The really good news is that you can spec them to fit almost anything, and choose just about any finish your credit card could ever desire. Decisions, decisions, eh?

www.rotiform.com

Sizes: Any 14-24-inch diameter, any 6-16-inch width

PCDs: Any

Offset: Any

Finishes: Any



SUNOCO 260 GT PLUS 110 UNLEADED FUEL, £4 (per litre)

Topping up your motor with this stuff is a bit like giving a 5-year old a crate of Red Bull and a family-size packet of Skittles – stand back, because you'll be getting much more than just wings and rainbows!

As we know regular super-unleaded has an octane rating of around 98. This brand-new formulation, from the largest race fuel manufacturer in the world, has a whopping 110 of the little buggers. That's more than in Avgas, you know, the stuff they run aeroplanes on.

What all this means is that you can get up to 10-percent more power in many engines, and it can also be used to 'cut' super-unleaded to provide an octane boost and help safeguard against detonation in highly-tuned, high-compression lumps. Taste the rainbow? Not half.

www.sunoco.co.uk



GTECHNIQ HALO, FROM £50 (30ML)

The boys and girls in white coats over at Gtechniq cook up some of the world's finest ceramic coatings. But what makes Halo here different, is that rather than paint, it's designed specifically for vinyl wraps and paint protection films. Shit, we didn't even know that was a thing!

This new offering creates a dense ceramic layer which improves water and dirt repellency, prevents staining and dirt ingress, and even combats the yellowing caused by UV rays. Apparently too, it's been pioneered by some bloke called Yianni (who, we hear, knows more about vinyl than Calvin Harris), on his very own chrome-wrapped Aventador. So it must be exactly as top-notch as their paint protection coatings, and those are about the best money can buy.

www.gtechniq.com



Riviera RV130, from £222 (each)

A sweet modern take on the classic '70s and '80s motorsport mesh design, we're loving these absolute whoppers from Riviera. You'll need some serious arches to fill if you fancy a set of these new RV130s though, because they only come in dubs and above! That said, with this sort of curb appeal, and the option of three stunning finishes, it's probably worth buying yourself something a bit more substantial to slap 'em on. The price is spot-on for such mahoosive wheels too. Epic stuff!

www.rivierawheels.co.uk

Sizes: 8.5 and 10x20, 9 and 10.5x22

PCDs: 5x108, 5x112, 5x120, blank

Offset: ET20-45

Finishes: Silver Brushed, Gloss Black,



Awesome Audio



HERTZ UNO SPEAKERS, FROM £50

The guys at Hertz are perhaps most well-known for their seriously high-end offerings, so it's nice to see them adding a thoroughbred entry-level range to their line-up, especially when it's one that comes with much of the same DNA.

Hertz Uno is a collection of shallow speakers specifically designed as drop-in replacements for your standard kit. Most crucially though, they're also specially engineered to work directly off your existing headunit, but without compromising on power delivery or fidelity.

There's four pairs of coaxials to choose from, along with three pairs of component speakers and even a shallow 12-inch woofer. But what's really special here is the incorporation of super-high frequency response and dispersion characteristics, along with the fact they use their patented 'V-Cone' technology to ensure that, particularly when they're mounted low down in the vehicle (like in your doors), the sound is lifted to your ears, to establish an accurate stereo image. What does all this fanny actually mean though? Simple. They sound better than just about any other budget speakers out there. And there's nothing not to love about that.

www.fourcaraudio.co.uk



TOP FEATURES

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PRODUCT TEST

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www.silverlinetools.com

Look out, it's some proper mechanic stuff this month...

Speciality car tools come in all shapes and sizes. They're not the universal gear that we all own, like socket sets or a hammer drills. What we mean here is the infinite number of random bits and pieces out there designed to do a single specialist job.

Bearing pullers, timing setting kits, hydraulic presses, seal drivers... these are the sort of items either reserved for professionals, or you only buy when things go tits up. If you're a tad hands-on with your cars, chances are you'll have loads of these knocking around. It's likely you used them once for that tricky job, and now they're languishing somewhere at the bottom of your tool box.

So why would you need another specialist tool? Well, a pro style-compression tester isn't about fixing a problem as such, it's more about finding (or avoiding) a bigger problem. It's also about revealing the condition of your engine internals and it could save you a bag load of cash along the way.



THE PRODUCT

Compression testing isn't half as complicated or scary as many pros would have you believe. Basically, it involves pulling out the fuel pump fuse, removing the spark plugs, connecting the tester in the spark plug holes, cranking over the engine and checking that all the cylinders (or rotor chambers) have equal pressure (about a 10-percent variance between them is usually acceptable). It can only be done with a specialist gauge like this and will explain away symptoms like a loss of power, a rough idle or excessive blue exhaust smoke, all in a matter of minutes. Most crucially, doing the job before having to open up the engine. What you're checking for here is leaky valves, timing belts/cams that aren't opening the valves as they should, blown head gaskets and worn piston rings.

This comprehensive little kit from Silverline is perfect for doing all of the above, but without breaking the bank. It's pretty simple, sure. But it's a universally trusted configuration and the same method any garage will be happy to charge you a fair few quid for. This one is surprisingly decent quality too, with tough rubber hoses, proper brass ends and a gauge that will read up to 300psi (most healthy cars will run at between 125-175psi). In fact, I don't see any reason why this couldn't be used time and time again – the lifetime guarantee says it all there.

What's great is that you also get a load of long-reach fittings and adaptors you don't tend to get with other basic testing kits and very often you'll need 'em. So the short of it is that it offers exceptional value for everything you'll need.

If you have a diesel car you won't be able to use this particular kit (because oil burners run with much higher compression). But don't worry, Silverline have a dedicated, well-priced set for those, too.



THE VERDICT

Have you lost your mind, Midge? I'm not a mechanic. What do I want one of those for? Well, I'm glad you asked, because this could be one of the best scores you ever lay out.

You see, diagnosing the bad stuff on your own car is one thing, but having one of these handy is even better to help stop you buying a lemon in the first place.

The fact is that plenty of the best bargain performance models out there can suffer from compression problems (Mazda RX-8s, Corsa VXRs and many, many others are known for this). And when you factor in the full engine build needed to fix 'em, they're obviously not going to be quite as cheap as they may appear. Using one of these could easily save you

both significant heartache, and a big financial kick in the plums.

I mean, you do an HPI check when you buy a car, right? You go around and kick the tyres, and you take off the oil cap to see if it's full of mayonnaise. An extra 20 minutes or so for a compression test isn't hardship if it could save you a few grand. After all, if your seller has nothing to hide, they're not going to mind are they?

Chances are, if you're looking for a budget bargain, you're not going to shell out the 100-300 quid for an independent vehicle check either, and compression is often the first thing on their test list. For less than 20 quid, it's almost silly not to have one.

“Using one of these could save you a big financial kick in the plums”

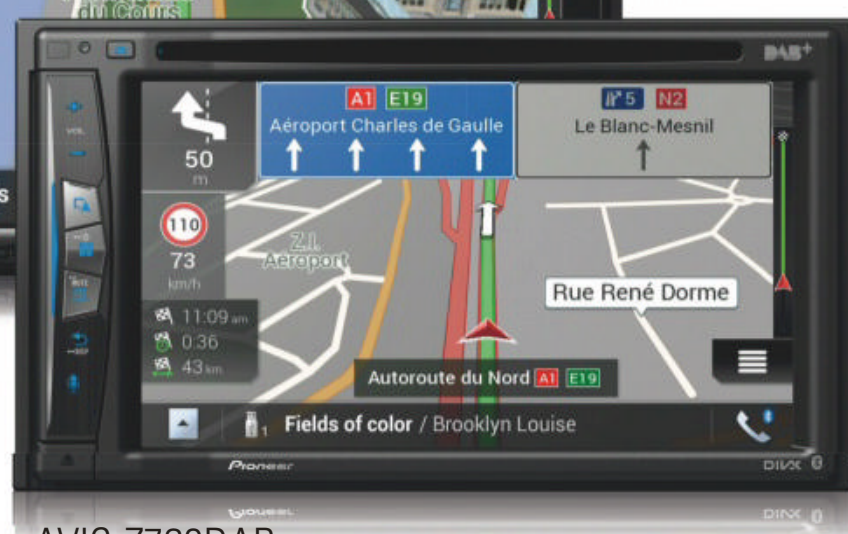
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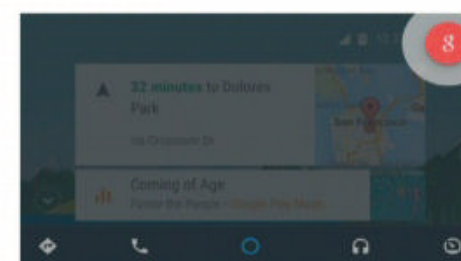
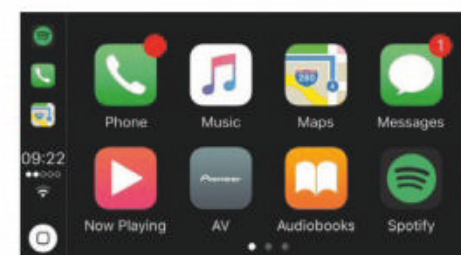
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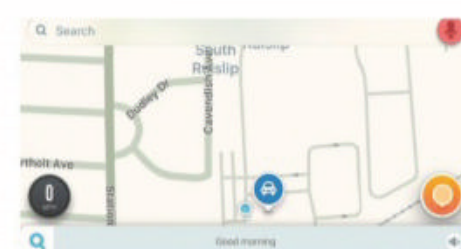
AVIC-Z820DAB



AVIC-Z720DAB



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FC FAVOURITES

MORE WHEELS

As we said last month, trying to put all our favourite wheels in one little feature would do little more than cause an office riot. So, having seen the big man's all-time favourites last time around, here's a few thoughts from our Midge...

My first set of wheels was, if I can remember back that far, some 6.5x15-inch BK Racing 7-spokes, which I crammed onto my 1.1-litre Mk3 Fiesta and immediately proceeded to drive around like I owned the whole of Dartford. Good times!

Let's just say I've owned more than a couple of sets since then. Having worked on FC for 15-plus years and spent the best part of that reviewing quite literally hundreds of the buggers, I've seen many more than my fair share too. But what would I actually spend (and indeed, have spent) my own cash on? Well, here are my FC Favourites...



2Forge ZF1, from £720 (set)

These are pure, all-business, lightweight racing wheels and I like that concept. But it isn't the design that floats my boat most here. It isn't even the fact they make use of the most recent flow-forming technology to achieve a (7.5x17-inch) starting weight of just 7.4kg. Nope, it's more that, rather cleverly, they can be spec'd to fit just about anything with big enough arches. You see, like all other 2Forge wheels, and the cast offerings from their sister company Bola, these have special 'PCD pockets', which are elongated blanks that can be drilled to just about any PCD. It doesn't matter who you are, that's quite the innovation!

www.2forgewheels.com

Sizes: 7.5, 8, 9 and 9.5x17, 8, 9 and 10x18

PCDs: Any 4x98-4x114.3, any 5x100-5x130

Finishes: Matt Black, Gloss Black, Gunmetal, White



3SDM 0.05, From £132 (each)

If I had a favourite cast wheel of all-time it would be the Ferrari-inspired 0.05 here. In fact, a good few years have gone by since they launched these, and I still think it's one of the benchmarks. The whole scene went ape shit when these dropped, and rightly so – I'm pretty sure they still haven't been beaten for German motors.

If I'm honest, the only reason I didn't buy a set back in the day, is because Jules beat me to it with his E46 BMW. But looking back, that was puerile, childish and just plain stupid on my part. Luckily there's still plenty of time...

www.3sdm.co.uk

Sizes: 8 and 9x16, 8.5 and 9.5x18, 8.5 and 9.5x19

PCDs: 5x100, 5x112, 5x120

Finishes: Silver Cut, White Cut, Gloss White, Satin Black



Center Line Convo Pro, From £245 (each)

Center Line in the USA may not be the best at spelling, but they're a dab hand when it comes to drag racing. That's the reason you'll find them making a super skinny 4x15-incher version of this epic rim. Still, this splitty may be classic and hardcore in equal measure, but I really don't have to explain why I love it so much do I? Just look at it!

www.centerlinewheels.com

Sizes: 4, 7, 8 and 10x15

PCD: 5x114.3

Finish: Polished



Rota BM8, From £125 (each)

My love of Japanese metal is well documented, as is my love of classic wheels from the Far East. But am I some sort of JDM purist? To be honest, no. I'm well aware that the BM8 looks a lot like a certain classic Japanese rim that I can't quite remember, or pronounce, the name of. But I couldn't care less that's it's more of a homage. I'm way too old to worry about that shite. The same goes for 'fake' splits and those replica BBS wheels you see knocking about. I don't want to know anyone who can tell the difference at first glance anyway. Besides, this thing is even more crazy than the original – we're talking wide 15s with a silly ET10 or ET0 offset here, that's it! Mark my words. History will prove the BM8 to be one of the greats.

www.rarerims.co.uk

Sizes: 8 and 9x15

PCDs: 4x100

Finishes: Black Polished Face, Bronze

Ronal URS, From £144 (each)

You'd have to be blind, or some sort of halfwit, not to covet the original Ronal Turbo, but I still (just about) prefer the URS. The 'Teddy' is probably the last of the all-time mental wheels, a rim that's so out of the box that it's forgotten what the box even looks like. Right up there with the Mazda 121 Koalas and Michelin Man wheels (seriously, Google 'em). You've just got to smile when you see these. And after all, that's what it's all about, right? Besides, these have been around for almost 30 years and I love their story. Apparently they started out as earrings from one of the company board members, a lady they affectionately called Bear Mother. Those crazy Germans. You really couldn't make that shit up!

www.speedlinecorse.net

Sizes 5.5 and 6x14

PCDs: 4x100

Finishes: White, Silver



Cali Off-Road Summit, From £600 (each)

I love cars (well, that's good to know – Jules), but my guilty pleasure is that I also love big-ass pickups. I don't know if it's because I have a touch of Yank in me (er, so to speak), or if it's because I spend most of the year sulking until I can pretend that going to SEMA is a 'business' trip. But, I'm a silly truck addict. Whether they're jacked up to the sky or body-dropped on their belly, I can't get enough.

Now this will make dick-all difference to your life if you drive a Golf. But there are a lot of mental wheels out there for pickups and the Cali Off-Road Summit is the one I want most. I'll never have a truck big enough for 'em, because I don't own the local Esso garage. But with only 6- or 8-stud PCDs, and offsets to ET-81 (yes: MINUS EIGHTY ONE!), these are some of the craziest wheels on the planet.

www.calioffroad.com

Sizes: 9, 10 and 12x20, 12x22, 12 and 14x24

PCDs: 6x135, 6x139, 6x127, 8x135, 8x139.7, 8x165, 8x170, 8x180

Finishes: Polished, Gloss Black with Milled Spokes

DREAM WHEEL

Vossen x Work VWS-1, From £965 (each)

I'm no wheel snob by any stretch of the imagination, but we all have our dream wheels, and these are mine. Designed by Vossen in the USA and custom built by the legendary Work Wheels in Japan, these forged, 3-piece collab wheels are utter perfection in my eyes. So much so that, as I'm getting on a bit now, I saved up for what seemed like two Ice Ages, just to import myself a set last year. They're not what you'd call cheap, and at the time they came with a bonus kick in the spuds from Her Majesty's Customs too. But you know what? They're still worth every penny.

Luckily if you're in the market, they're now available in the UK through the Prestige Wheel Centre, so give them a call. Well, unless you happen to have a beige TT of course. Then you can sod right off!

www.vossenwheels.com

www.prestigewheelcentre.co.uk

Sizes: 19 and 20 diameters, 7.5-12.5 widths

PCDs: Any

Finishes: Any custom



Words & Photos: **Midge**

DIY DAY JOBS & WEEKEND WONDERS

SUB AND AMP

More awesome lows this month... in the audio sense, naturally.



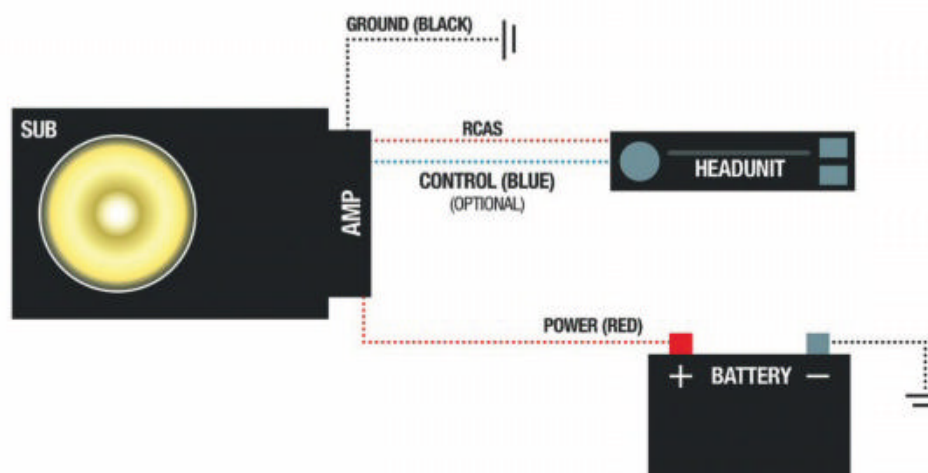
Here's a cracking DIY Day Job for you and one you can sort out easily in an afternoon. But why do you need a sub in your car, we hear you ask? Well, the truth is that you don't have to be some sort of drum and bass fanatic to appreciate a few decent lows in your set-up. In reality, no matter

what your taste in choonage, without a subwoofer in your system, you're not getting the whole audio spectrum that's originally recorded on your music. So, there you go, that's why you need one – and here's our guide to how you can whack one in along with the amp you'll need to run it...

DO IT!

1 SAFETY FIRST

First things first, from a health and safety point of view, we'd recommend disconnecting your battery first as you'll be fiddling around behind your head unit after all. Do I always do that? To be honest, no, but I'm not going to send you a narky email if I get zapped either. You know the score by now, use your head.



THE GEAR

Fitting Time: A good afternoon for this one, nothing drastic.

Costs: Sub, amp and wiring kits from £200.

Obviously, the kit you choose will depend on a great deal on your budget. The best advice we can give is to go for the best you can afford, and buy it from a trusted brand. The cheap stuff can often be a huge false economy, not to mention sound pretty damn shite! And no one wants that, do they?

As you can imagine (what with you being a huge bass head you mean? – Jules), we've chosen to do it properly with some award-winning gear from US audio maestros Kicker. What we've got here is a passive set-up (a separate amp and woofer) using a compact CompC, 10-inch enclosure, paired with an extremely small but powerful 600watt RMS, Class-D subwoofer amp. It's clear that both of these are as cutting edge as it gets, so we're certainly not messing about!

You could go for an active set-up, of course (a woofer box with a built-in amplifier), especially if you're tight on space, and the fitting process is much the same. The same rules apply: always look for quality and a well-known brand over any flashy marketing.

As for getting it all in, we've also chosen a perfectly-rated Celsus amp wiring kit to make sure we have everything we need to get it all hooked up successfully. So, make a start...

www.kickeruk.com

www.celsusice.co.uk

Specialist Tools:

Apart from the obvious, the screwdriver and all-important 10mm spanner for your battery, all you'll need here is some wire cutters, strippers and a crimping tool. You can get these at Euro Car Parts for around a fiver a pop.

www.eurocarparts.co.uk



2 LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Right, now we're ready to rumble, so you're going to need to work out where you'll be installing your kit and, most importantly, if it all fits. This may be under a seat or in the back somewhere, but for the vast majority of applications, you'll be putting your sub and amp in the boot.

The thing to remember here is that everything has to be screwed down securely; you don't want your expensive new gear sliding around all over the place. Some top-quality products (like these) come with brackets to bolt them down and you

may want to consider taking the time to build a false floor out of mdf. Alternatively, many like to mount their amp to the back of the seat, or simply screw to the back of the sub box. In my little test Puma (er, when did you buy a bloody Puma? – Jules) space is tight, so I'll keep it neat and go for the latter.

Anyway, get your gear in the right location and check it all fits. Being a little OCD, I like to keep the wrapping on for this bit. Once you've worked it all out, whip it back out.



3 POWER CIRCUIT

Perhaps the most feared job in fitting any amplifier is getting the power and ground hooked up, so I always like to start with that.

Amplifiers take their positive 12V power straight from the car battery, and that means the first job is bridging the gap.



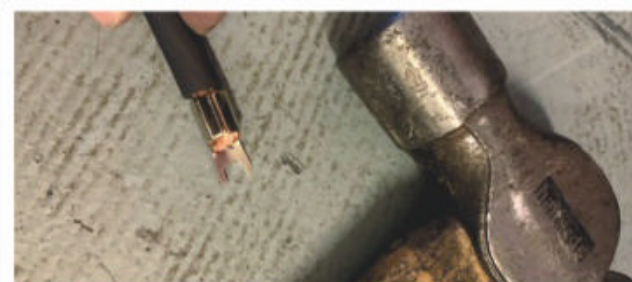
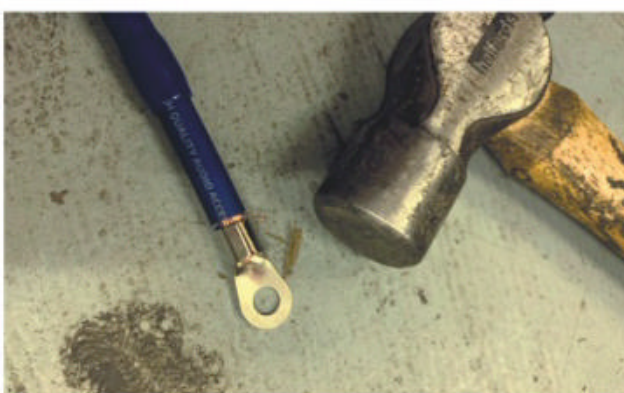
Your amp wiring kit will have a big, fat power cable (sometimes it'll be red, in our case it's blue), a large ring connector and a fuse block, you'll be needing those.

As for running your power cable, you may be lucky and have a car (like a Beemer) where the battery is in the boot. In that case, you won't need much cable. For the majority of applications, though, the battery will be under your bonnet, so you'll need to find a way through the bulkhead and into the cabin.

I tend to look for a way through where the original wiring is fitted, or sometimes you may find a handy rubber grommet in the bulkhead. When you've found a decent route, get that power cable poked through. Inside the car you'll need to get the cable all the way through to the amp. The most common way is to run your wiring under the carpet between the doors and the seats. Remove any trim and lay your cable.



fuse block. Then you can get back under the bonnet, mount the fuse close to the battery and connect the other end of the power cable (that goes through the bulkhead). Don't hook the ring connector up to the battery just yet.



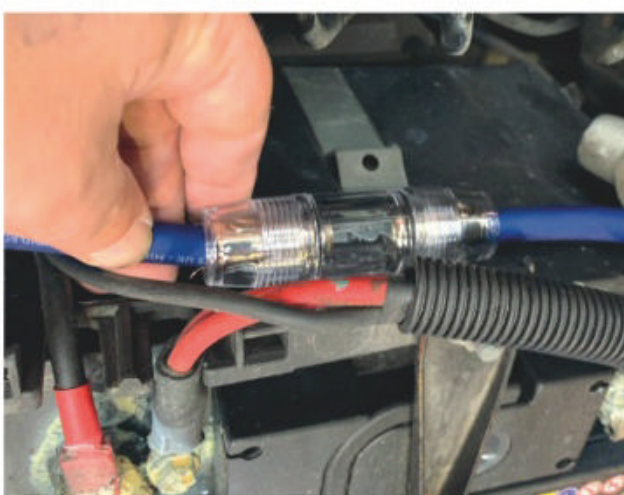
4 FUSING

Next up, the in-line fuse. This is always mounted between the battery and the amplifier, as close to the battery as you can.

The first thing to do is cut off a foot or so of power cable and strip the ends. This will be the bit that goes from the fuse, directly to the battery.

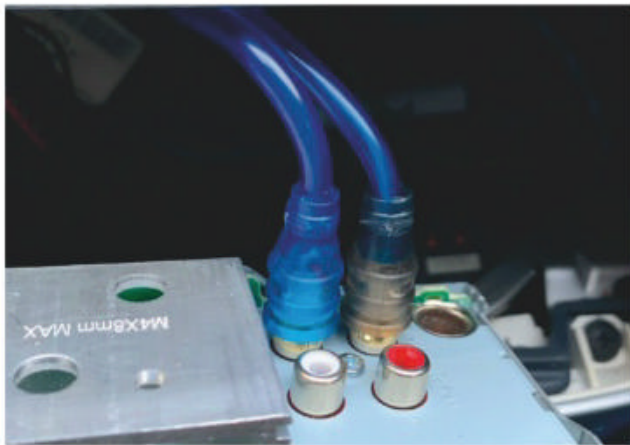
In most amp wiring kits, you'll find a ring connector for the positive terminal. Fitting this to the cable is a simple case of sliding onto your stripped end and squashing down with a hammer. You can then slide over the insulation boot.

Next up, this short cable can be attached to your



5 GROUND CABLE

The other fat cable you'll find in your kit is the shorter chassis earth (ground) cable. Once again, you'll need to tap a ring or fork connector onto the end. Only then can you find a good, clean chassis connection near the amp. Usually you'll be able to track down a 'common' earth (one where part of the factory wiring is earthed), or a bolt going into the chassis. In our case, we connected to one of the seat mountings. It's important that the connection goes to clean bare metal, so you may need to clean off any paint that will stop you getting a good connection. Once that's done, you'll have your +12 power and ground ready to go.



6 SIGNAL

Now you need a way of switching the amplifier on and off, but we'll get to that in a mo. First, you'll want to take a look at how you'll be getting a signal to the amp. There's two ways of doing this, via a 'high' or 'low' level input. Which one you choose will depend on the headunit you have fitted. In our case, we have an aftermarket item with low-level preouts, so we can use those to connect directly to the amp with RCA leads.

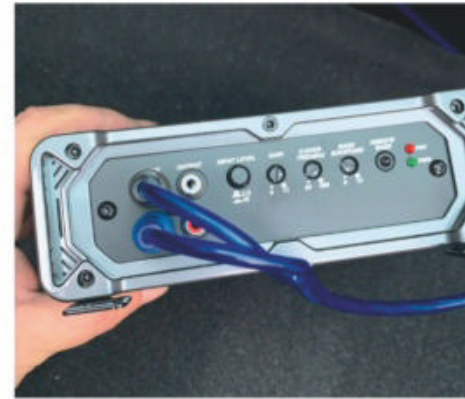
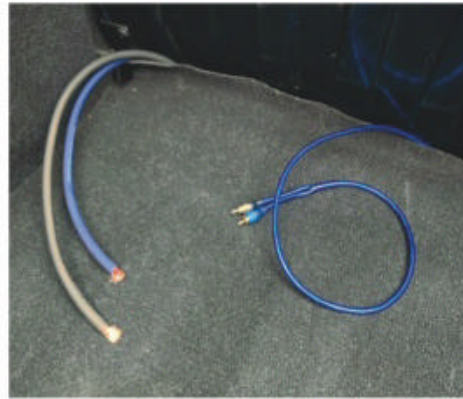
If you're connecting to a stock headunit that doesn't have preouts, you'll be looking to make a high-level connection using the original speaker wires. This is simple enough, although you'll always need to check that your amplifier has the ability to accept this sort of signal first (as you can imagine, this high-end Kicker job does just that).

Some amplifiers have a special plug that you'll need to use, but with this one (because our amp can accept high-level inputs without a line out converter, which is bloody clever), we can simply cut off the RCA plugs and splice the speaker wires to the RCA cables.

7 HOOK UP YOUR AMP

Now you've got almost everything you need in the boot to get rolling. I always like to keep plenty of slack on the wires for manoeuvrability, so the amp can be wired-in and set up before you mount it. You can always tuck away any excess cable later.

Now it's time to connect your RCAs (or high-level connection), along with the power and earth cables, to your amp.



8 SWITCHING

I've left this bit until last because it varies depending on the amplifier you're using. But, simply speaking, you need a way of switching the amp on and off with your headunit, so it's not drawing power all of the time. In most cases, this will require a remote wire connected to the remote (or electric aerial power/switched +12V), on the back of the headunit. This is also what the blue wire in your cable kit will be for. Some amplifiers, including this one, don't use this method for high-level inputs. Instead, they detect

the DC power surge when the signal fires up, and automatically turn on the power circuit. This is particularly useful when connecting your amp to a stock headunit because finding a remote out will often be quite the head scratcher.

This time, though, we're using low-level RCAs with a low voltage on an aftermarket headunit, so this blue remote wire will need to be connected to fire up the system. The input on the amp is between the power and earth inputs.

9 HOOK UP YOUR WOOFER

With your amp all nicely connected up, you can wire in your woofer with the speaker cable in your kit. You'll only need a short length to get to the sub, so lop a length of cable off and get the ends stripped. Some simply wrap the wires around the screws on the amp connections, but personally I like to crimp on fork connectors and then screw them in neatly. At the other end, you can hook up to your sub, being careful to get the positive and negative wires the correct way around.



10 POWER IT UP

Before you get your sub and amplifier all screwed down tightly, connect the fuse side of the power cable to the battery, and check it all turns on. If all is well, reinstall your headunit, pop on some music and you can set up the gain, and fiddle with all your crossover/bass boost settings.

A good basic indication is to set your headunit volume to around three quarters, and then turn up the gain until you hear the beginnings of any distortion, and then back it off a little from there. Over the next 100-hours or so of music, your sub will be bedding in. So, bear in mind that you may have to go back and tweak the settings now and again until then.

For now, though, if you're happy with the way it sounds, you can get the amplifier and sub mounted securely, and you're done. Easy, eh? Happy listening.



PERFORMANCE PARTS

Not just standard parts



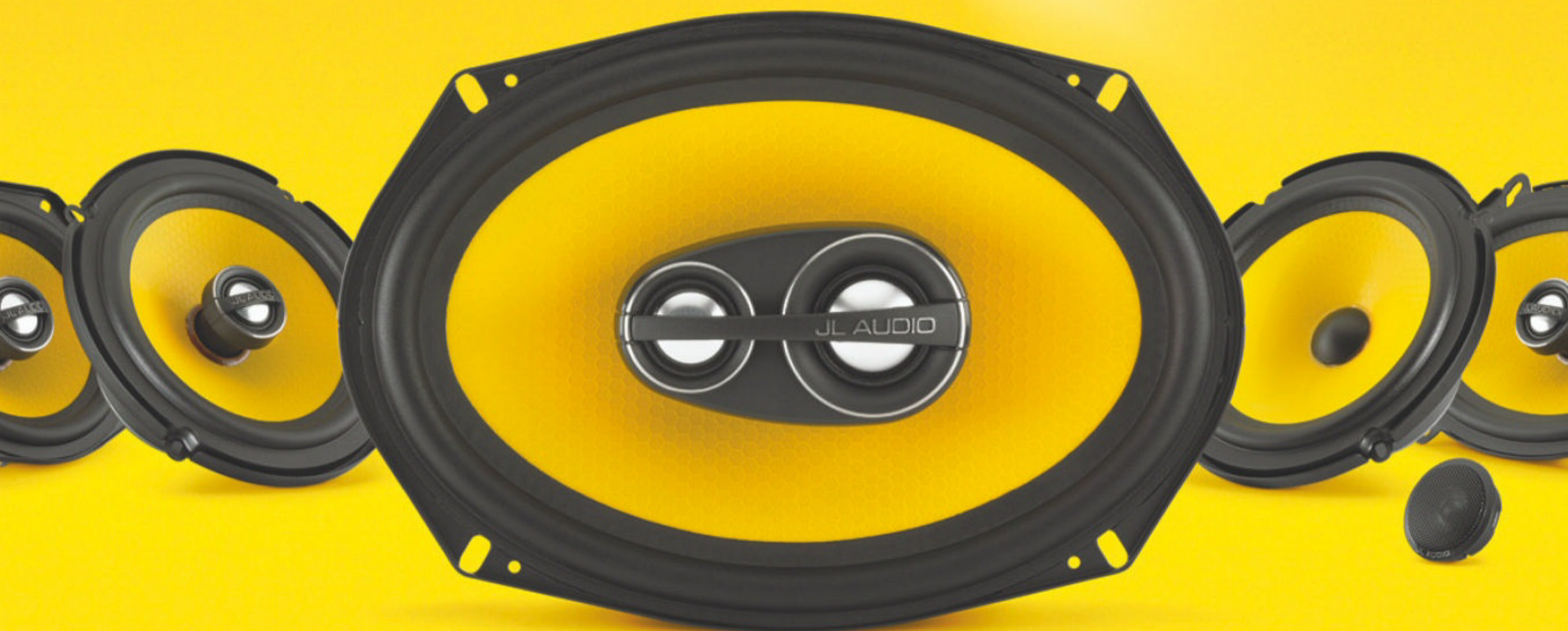
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HOT RIDE

There was a time when it looked like the UK wouldn't be receiving any more saloon-bodied WRXs. The third-generation Impreza threw a dramatic curveball into the performance car market in 2007, by screwing up all the years of rally-bred sports car heritage into a tight little ball and seemingly throwing it in the bin. It was a hatchback, you see, and that confused people.

As it turned out, the performance variants were pretty epic, and they did make a saloon version, just to throw further confusion into the mix for the marque historians of the future – and then the fourth-gen arrived in 2011 and all bets were off.

Another hatchback, with an offshoot which was a four-door saloon, the VA series, which wasn't badged as an Impreza at all. They simply badged it WRX or, in sportier guise, WRX STI. So having resigned ourselves to the fact we wouldn't be getting any more Impreza WRX saloons in Britain, we suddenly got a new one unexpectedly in 2014. Except we didn't because it wasn't called an Impreza. Confused? Yeah we kinda need a drink just thinking about it.

Befuddling as it all may be, if we bear in mind that it's essentially an Impreza under the skin, the WRX STI all makes perfect sense. It certainly does to Sammy Housden, who's been an Impreza enthusiast and fervent tuner for years. "I've owned modified cars since I learned to drive at 17, so it's something I've always been into," she explains. "I've had Imprezas since I was 19 and gradually just got newer and newer ones. There's something about the sound of them that no other car I ever looked at could compare to! They're reliable and practical too, ideal for me as a family car."

SOUND CHOICE

We know what she means about the sound. It's the unmistakeable wubba-wubba-wubba idle which

Who says you need a boring Qashqai or Zafira to drop the kids off at school? This low-down WRX STI proves you can be sensible and silly at the same time

Words **Dan Bevis** Photography **Daniel Pullen**



MODERN FAMILY



HOT RIDE

OWNER PROFILE:

Name: Sammy Housden

Age: 30

Occupation: Market researcher

First car: Renault Clio

Dream car:

Lamborghini Aventador – though I love S15s too!

Favourite mod on your car: Gotta be the Air Lift kit.

Favourite show: 100% Tuning, Modified Nationals and TRAX.

Track day or Show & Shine? Show & Shine!

Lessons learned from this project? I should have picked a cheaper hobby.

What's next? Wider arches, new wheels, and a carbon splitter.

Practical doesn't mean boring



transmutes into an offbeat thrum before rising to a gargling crescendo that keeps these car's fans awake at night. And practical? Yeah, these machines tick a lot of boxes: that towering rear spoiler is bolted to a massive boot, there's plenty of room in the back (and ISOFIX, of course), and you get all the toys you need for comfort and convenience. All that said, we're not What Car? We don't do standard car reviews. So you'll be pleased to note Sammy's followed her established route of modding the family mumwagon to a pretty savage degree.

"My boyfriend actually bought me the car, along with an engagement ring – I think he must have thought he needed something more to guarantee a yes out of me than just the ring!" she laughs.

"It already had a few bits like the exhaust system, splitter, skirts, gauges and air filter, so it stood out compared to any of the others that were for sale." A decent base for modding then, and as anyone who's driven an STI knows, there's a whole bunch of potential for hilarity in there. We had one on test back when they were new and the delivery driver pointed out two things that really sum up what sort of car this is: "Just remember, everyone tries to race you in this car," he said. "You've just got to learn to ignore people. They'll always be trying it on. Also, whenever you check your blind spot, you'll think there's someone under- or overtaking you; nine times out of 10 it'll just be the spoiler catching your eye." That's what sort of car this is. A belligerent, shouty, aggressive one. Don't go thinking practical means boring.

Remapped to churn out 331bhp and a thudding 350lb/ft of torque

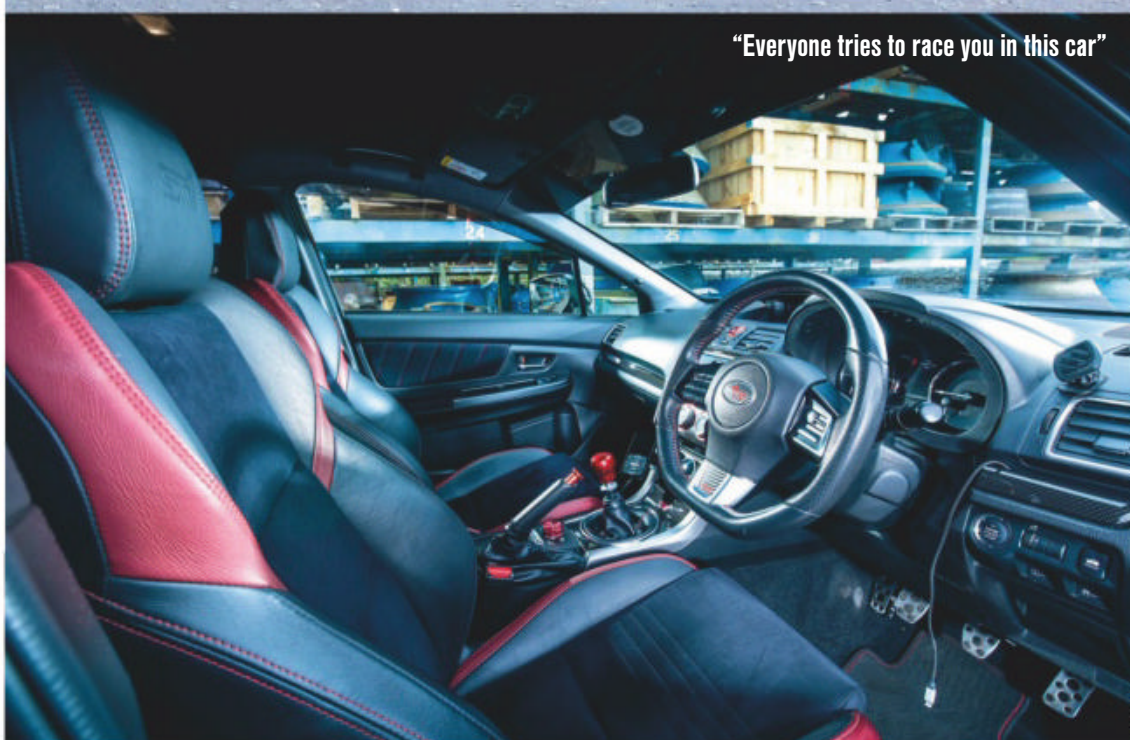


“There’s something about the sound – no other car can compare!”



Keen to maximise this performance potential, Sammy’s car has been remapped to churn out a robust 331bhp, backed up by a thudding 350lb/ft of torque, which is more than enough to turn the school run into a white-knuckle thrill-ride. “I got the car in July last year and spent some time thinking about where to go with it,” Sammy explains. “I was weighing up the options of air-ride or coilovers, but having had both on cars I’d previously owned, I knew I’d never be happy with coilovers! So I set my heart on air and spent five months saving for parts that would instantly improve the look, rather than doing it bit by bit. I got inspiration from some of the American builds, so I knew exactly what I wanted.

“My fella is pretty handy when it comes to cars,” she continues. “So he fits all my parts for me. It conveniently worked out that when my air-ride turned up, he’d got a week off work, and spent the whole week sorting mine for me – despite the fact he’d been planning to work on his own car! Luckily we didn’t really hit any hurdles along the way, so far so good.”



“Everyone tries to race you in this car”



TECH SPEC: SUBARU WRX

STYLING

Metallic Black; Perrin wing stabilisers; wind deflectors; front splitter; sideskirt extensions; rear bumper corner extensions; black vortex generators.

TUNING

2.5-litre turbo flat-four; remapped (331bhp, 350lb.ft); Invidia cat-back exhaust system with rolled titanium tips; HKS dump valve, Hella horns; Perrin air filter; alloy radiator; Samco silicone hose kit; Exedy organic clutch.

CHASSIS

9.5x18in ET38 Rota Grid Drift wheels – powdercoated in Pure Bronze; 225/35 Nankang tyres; Air Lift Performance 3P suspension; Brembo brakes.

INTERIOR

Pro Sport oil temp and pressure gauges; Pioneer headunit.

THANKS

Thanks to my boyfriend Sim for fitting all my parts and putting up with it all (and me); and also to VIP Motorsport; Fix A Wheel; Number Plate Clinic; Reflec Signs & Graphics; Meguiar's UK; and last but not least www.qmsupplies.com for use of the location.



Indeed that phrase 'so far so good' really sums up the build. Every decision here is a right one and it proves you don't have to go completely mental with a project to create something that really stands out. We love the idea of bagging Subarus in general anyway, simply because it winds up the purist rally nutters. And it can't be denied that the WRX STI looks fabulous when it's laid out on the tarmac. Those chunky haunches and long, straight sills really react well to a drop in altitude, and the bronze-powdercoated Grid Drifts are an excellent accompaniment to the dazzlingly menacing metallic black paintwork.

GETTING SCHOOLED

"People always ask how I get over speed bumps," she laughs. "I use the car on a daily basis for things like the school run – it's a pricey way to get the kids to school, but who wouldn't want dropping off in it?!"

See, what Sammy's doing here isn't just cruising around town in a badass ride (although that is indisputably what she is doing). She's making her mark on posterity, creating memories for her kids' futures. So many times when we talk to feature car owners, their inspiration stems back to the cool cars their parents had when they were little, and that's what we're viewing in real-time here: the creation of the next generation.

This car is the culmination of years of Subaru love. Sammy's show-stopping daily is packing a true all-in-the-family proposition. Fast, practical, agile, tactile, with a trophy-winning finish – it's brilliant at everything it does. There's no Impreza badge on it, but there might as well be. Rapid boxer-engined saloons rock on many levels, and Sammy's family transport is ruling the game. ■

Mods include Perrin wing stabilisers, wind deflectors and front splitter



BOX CLEVER

A boxer engine is so-named because the cylinders punch away from each other instead of sitting all in a line. Imagine a V4 engine (that is, a V6 with a couple of cylinders lopped off), and just keep mentally increasing the V-angle until the banks of cylinders are lying completely flat. You see? The crank's in the middle, and there's a pair of cylinders punching out from either side.

These engines offer great handling benefits; you get a lower centre of gravity because more of the engine weight is lower down compared to an inline four, so your car has a reduced propensity to body roll in the corners. Your left-right weight balance is also inherently better, with half the cylinders sitting either side of the centre line, and in addition, you've got less engine mass hanging out in front of the wheel line, so you need less steering effort to turn the car.

In the case of Subaru boxers, the crankcase and heads are all aluminium which keeps things nice and light. They're also very durable, because the nature of having pistons moving in opposite directions on the same plane means the engine has good rotational balance. These engines have low levels of vibration and harshness, meaning less overall wear and thus better reliability and longevity. The crankshaft can be lighter too, since it's sandwiched between two sturdy crankcase halves, and a lighter crank means a revvier motor. Win-win!

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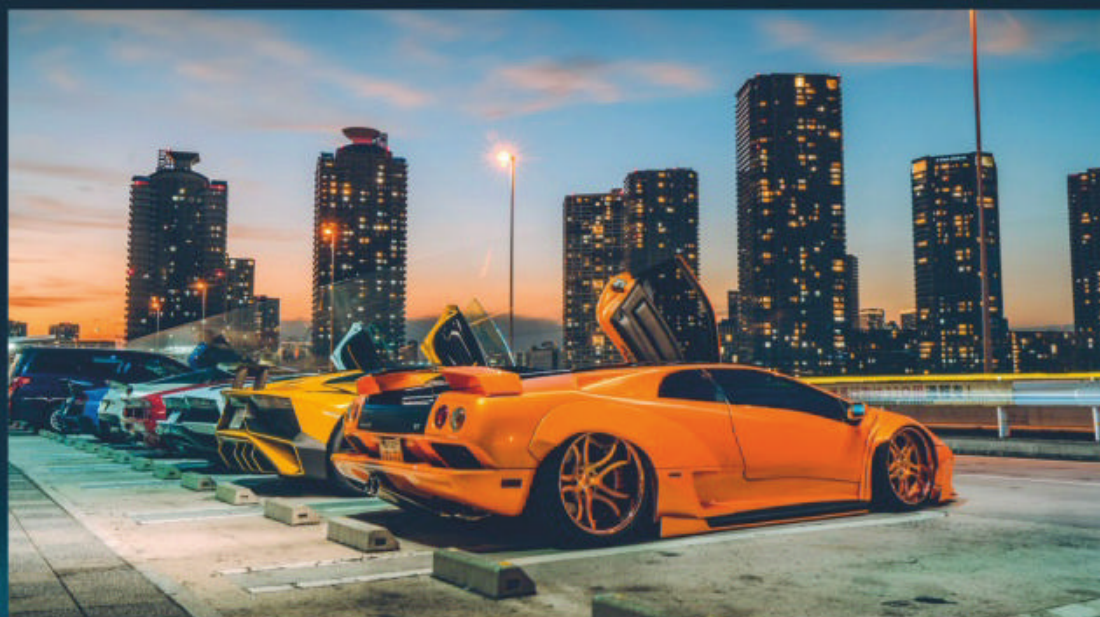
'Japan is just full of Aventadors and Murcielagos with LEDs...' Wrong. There's also some Diablos, too! Back in January I set up a shoot with music producer (and all around nice-guy) Souki, who, upon arriving in his aired-out orange Diablo decided to invite a few friends. Funnily enough they weren't in a Corsa...

Location: Tatsumi PA, Tokyo Bay

Raging Bulls

This photo might look dramatic, but the noise was on another level! There's thirty-six unsilenced cylinders between these three Lamborghinis alone, and lurking right behind 'em was another three. Well worth the tinnitus shortly after.

Location: C1 Wangan, Tokyo



Japanese Car Culture

Japan's car culture is unlike anywhere else in the world. For nearly twenty years I've obsessed over the place – the cars, the culture, the quirks and mannerisms. But nothing, and I mean nothing, prepares you for the sensory overload that is Tokyo. It's one of the few places in the world which genuinely exceeds even your wildest expectations...

What becomes quickly apparent is that Japanese car culture is everywhere. And that might sound obvious, but it is entirely normal to see LED-clad Lamborghinis casually driving around the streets at all times of the day. 'Cus cars are used and appreciated here, they're not tucked away in the hope of becoming 'appreciating assets'.

And then there's the tuning culture. Nowhere else in the world embraces it quite like the Japanese. And being brutally honest, they

have their fair share of atrocities driving around too. But you know what? That doesn't matter, because the Japanese don't shame others for their taste and ability – they appreciate the work whether you've DIY-tuned your £3k Celica or embarked on a full nut-and-bolt resto on a Ferrari Dino. There are no forum warriors here.

Over the past twelve months I've been lucky to visit Japan several times for work, and naturally two decades of JDM obsession released overnight saw very little sleep... but very many cars. Having worked as a car photographer for five years and within automotive publishing for over double that, it still blows my mind to be able to call this work. But I'll let you into a little secret – this is just Japan. There's no photo-trickery here, it really is as awesome as it looks...

Words: & Photography: **Mark Riccioni**

JAPANESE CAR CULTURE



Boso Bikers

Japan's love of motoring isn't just exclusive to cars; it's equally as prolific with bikes, too. Having previously met at Daikoku PA, I joined the 'Brothers' for a ride-out into Tokyo bay with upwards of 30+ riders joining in. Revving, weaving through traffic and Boso-inspired bikes = match made in heaven.

Location: Shingawa City, Tokyo

Top Fuel

You can't visit Japan and not photograph an R34 GT-R, right? Especially when it's slammed over 18in TE37-Vs like Takafumi's pictured here. Inevitably, fuel is a necessity on any GT-R shoot, but being Japan it just looked far too cool not to take a picture.

Location: Midori Ward, Tokyo



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Gunmetal/Polished

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7"x17", 7.5"x17",
7.5"x18", 8"x18",
8"x19"



LUCCA

Polar Silver, Diamond
Black, Diamond Black/
Polished

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TURISMO

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Gloss Black

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JAPANESE CAR CULTURE



Free-wheeling

When the Japanese adopt a certain style or culture, they don't go about it with half measures. Tatsuya Yuhara's 1964 Impala is proof of exactly that. It's a three-wheelin', pro-hoppin' lowrider built to a standard beyond what you'd see in LA. Oh, and it's twice the length of a typical Kei car, too.

Location: Shinjuku, Tokyo

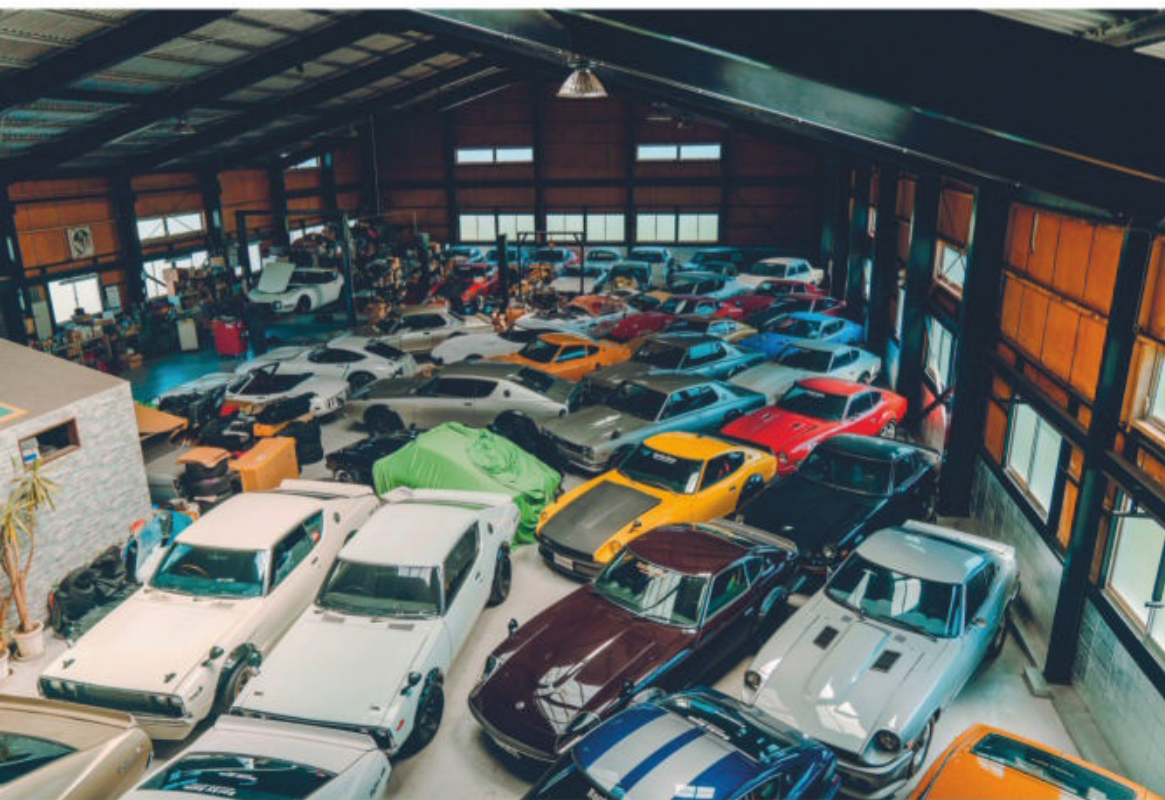




Night Clubbing

One of the most famous spots for car culture in Japan. Daikoku Futo PA is a rest stop – a car park – the equivalent to Chieveley Services on the M6. But for decades it's been THE place to meet up thanks to its huge space and Wangan routes which surround it. Our tip? Visit on a Friday/Saturday/Sunday evening for the biggest turnouts.

Location: Daikoku PA, Yokohama



Rocky Heaven Show

Heaven really is a place on earth, and it's taken the shape of Rocky Auto in Nagoya. For all the years I've been visiting tuners and car collectors, I've never – and I mean never – seen a collection quite like that of Rocky Auto's. The more you look, the better it gets.

Location: Nagoya, Japan



Crazy Karts

Road-legal go karts buzzing around Tokyo traffic while being dressed as your favourite Nintendo characters. Sounds like the mother of all wacky dreams, but in Japan it's just another daytime activity.

Location: Shibuya, Tokyo

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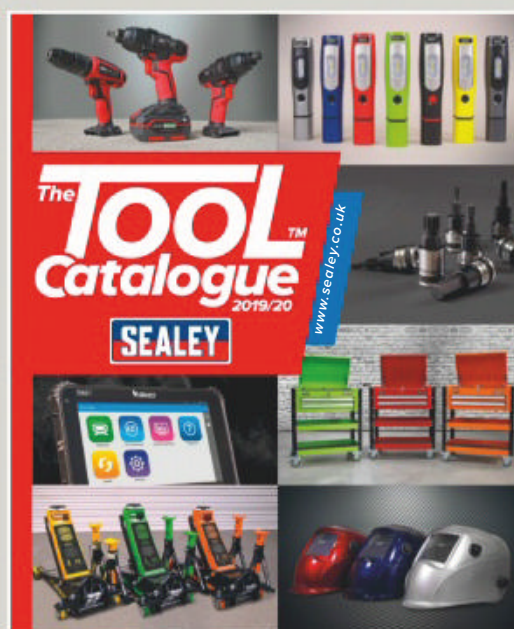
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Words Sam Preston Photography SerialOne

HIGH CARB, LOW FAT,

Honda S2000s are all about lightweight, NA thrills. But Supakorn Wongklahan's savage example here takes this formula further than perhaps any other, thanks to its fully carbon wide-body and screaming all-motor powerplant...

The more eagle-eyed among you may have noticed some of the incredible cars we've been showcasing from the mean streets of Thailand over the past few issues, as our snappers continue their epic quest to unearth only the most awesome vehicles from all corners of the planet.

If these beasts are anything to go by, it's safe to say this relatively small South East Asian country is packing an almighty punch on the global modified car scene right now. And a large proportion of this magic seems to be stemming from one tuning house in particular: Garage Unique, based on the outskirts of Bangkok and known for whipping up some of the finest wide-body JDM monsters known to man.

We've seen just what Garage Unique can offer, then, but it got us thinking: what on earth does head honcho Supakorn Wongklahan choose as his daily driver once he's packed up his tools and finished tinkering with yet another super-exciting project in his day job?

Thankfully, the answer is every bit as special as you'd imagine, as we're about to show you...



Or is it the Batmobile?



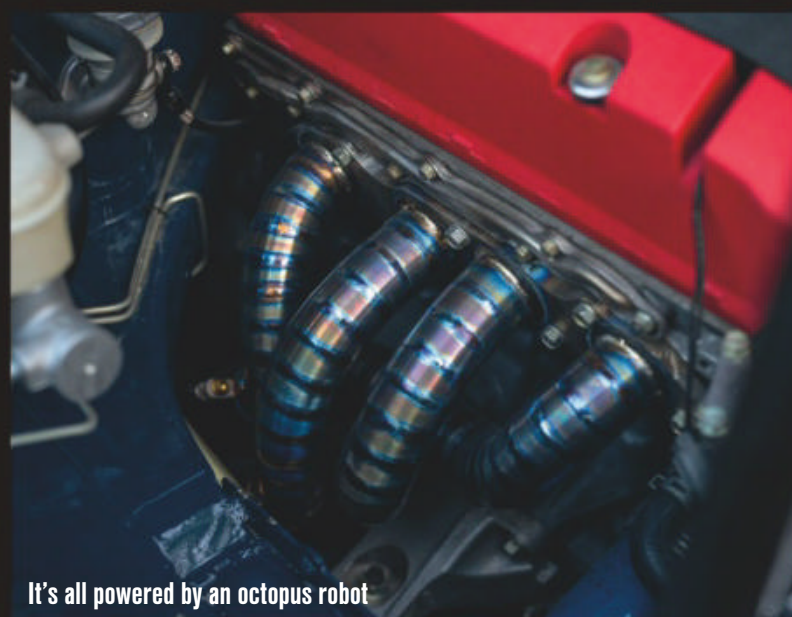
Featuring a full Garage Unique carbon fibre wide-body kit



HOT RIDE



The Arc of aceness



It's all powered by an octopus robot

aspirated engine cranked up to 11 and its lightweight body transformed into a carbon fibre work of art, this is one S2K we really wouldn't want to mess with.

It's taken several years in-between working on loyal customer cars, but Supakorn is finally happy with the way his rabid roadster now stands, which means we were eventually given the green light to ogle over every inch of its awesomeness.

We think it'd be rude not to start things off by taking a look at that sumptuous body, don't you? Garage Unique is famed for creating fully bespoke wide-body conversion kits that are custom made for every application (hence the name of the company), and this time around is no exception. Although instead of the normal FRP components, Supakorn was after something a little more special for his own project. "Pretty much every body panel you can see from the outside is made from real carbon fibre," he smiles.

Yep, as you might've guessed from the exposed weave effect that's been carefully retained, everything from the new bumpers, side skirts, comprehensive vented wide arches



CRANKED UP TO 11

Cue stage left, this rather brutal Honda S2000, a car which Supakorn has taken above and beyond perhaps what any other machine coming out of Garage Unique has gone through, in an attempt to showcase the ultimate form of what his company can offer. And with that normally



That's some super-tasty carbon fibre



“Every body panel you see from the outside is made from carbon fibre”



REAR OF THE YEAR

It's hard to find an angle where this S2K doesn't look 110 percent animalistic in its aesthetic. But the rear is arguably the finest section of all. With that JDM-favourite cut-off bumper revealing those no-nonsense centre exit titanium exhaust pipes in all their glory, as well as those uprated 'angel eye' rear lights and a carbon fibre ducktail spoiler jutting off the boot lid, it makes for a formidable sight that's sure to disappear into the distance rather effortlessly with very little warning.

and even the bonnet are all made from this lightweight composite – shedding countless pounds whilst looking seriously epic in the process.

What's even cooler is the fact the car's original blue colour is still shamelessly visible in places such as the engine bay and with the convertible soft top roof – giving the hot Honda a satisfyingly functional aesthetic that works perfectly.

DARK CHROME FINISH

The kit gives off enough extra girth to comfortably accommodate Supakorn's wheels of choice – some 10.5in-wide multi-spoke beauties from local firm, GAIA Racing. Polished up in a dark chrome finish, they're the perfect match for that moody bodywork. Keen to showcase as many components as possible from loyal local firms, the tyres are also from a proud Bangkok supplier – Splendid Tires – whose SD09 semi-slick offering has been creating waves in the Asian car scene lately for all the right reasons.

To capitalise on that newly formed squat stance, a set of adjustable TEIN coilovers are dialled in nice and low, with plenty of negative camber on each corner for the ultimate



10.5in-wide multi-spoke beauties from local firm GAIA Racing

HOT RIDE

↘ street-slayer vibe. It's interesting to learn that Supakorn has opted for a static setup, as opposed to an air ride offering like a lot of his clients choose – and helps to explain a lot about how he intends to use his steed now it's finished.

It's something that becomes more apparent as you pop that vented bonnet up front, and marvel at what stares back at you. Refreshingly, there's no massive turbo or whining supercharger to be seen, with Supakorn instead sticking to Honda's all-motor ethos that ensured the S2000's high-revving F20C engine was such a hit upon the car's launch.

“The rapid street machine vibe continues on the inside”

That's not to say no work's been carried out here though. Quite the contrary. You see, the whole 2.0-litre lump has had a full internal overhaul which sees forged components make an appearance inside the block, and a re-worked head up top for optimum response. Complete with a rare ARC intake, a trick fuelling system and a stunning titanium exhaust system that ensures air flows as freely as

possible from manifold to back box, the result is a seriously healthy 270bhp from this compact package.

It's little surprise to hear that this car is now a whole load of fun to pilot around the back-streets of Bangkok or out on track. In fact, it even drew the attention of a certain Keiichi 'Drift King' Tsuchiya on one of his recent visits to the country – the skidding legend soon jumping behind the wheels for some satisfying sideways thrills.

Drop yourself low into the compact cabin, and you'll instantly see how that rapid street machine vibe continues inside. Take that driver-only GT3-style bucket seat that acts as such a contrast over the factory leather passenger offering – there with the unashamed task of providing more support to the lucky pilot from the new-found G-forces now on tap. It's the same with touches like the grippy leather GReddy steering wheel, and that carbon fibre (surprise, surprise) gearknob from tuning house Mugen.



TECH SPEC: HONDA S2000

STYLING

Full Garage Unique carbon fibre wide-body kit (comprising vented front bumper, custom cut-away rear bumper, front lip, vented side skirts, rear ducktail spoiler, front and rear wide arches and vented bonnet); Craft Square F1-style carbon fibre wing mirrors; custom 'angel eye'-style clear rear lights; factory convertible soft-top roof.

TUNING

2.0-litre F20C VTEC four-cylinder engine; re-build and forged block (with Wiseco high-compression pistons, BC lightweight con rods and ACL crankshaft); re-worked head (with BC Stage 1 camshafts and BC valve springs/retainers); ARC cold air intake; 70mm throttle body; custom Garage Unique fuel rail; AEM fuel pressure regulator; Walbro fuel pump; GReddy aluminium radiator; G-Force custom titanium exhaust manifold with Firetorch/Thokunart full custom titanium exhaust system; six-speed manual gearbox with LSD; ORC clutch.

CHASSIS

10.5x18in GAIA Racing XXXV alloy wheels; 265/35x18 Splendid Zeno SD09 semi-slick tyres; TEIN Flex Z coilovers; modified factory front camber arms; Tuner Concept rear camber arms; AP Racing four-pot callipers with 290mm discs (front).

INTERIOR

Custom Street Warrior/Garage Unique GT3-style driver's bucket seat; GReddy leather steering wheel; Mugen carbon-fibre gearknob.

SHOUT

Garage Unique; Take a Wrap; SerialOne Photographer.

Custom Street Warrior/
Garage Unique GT3-style
driver's bucket seat



Some say 'a race car can always be a show car, but a show car isn't automatically a race car'. And that might just be the perfect phrase to sum up this aggressive build here from the talented Supakorn.

It's been a long time since we've seen such unashamed functionality on a road-legal vehicle, and it's this boldness that itself makes it such a joy to admire, even when it's sitting still. When it gets moving and that howling VTEC motor take over, it just gets better and better... ■



The compact package delivers
a very healthy 270bhp

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FAST PROJECTS



TOM'S R5 GT TURBO

Tom got very excited when Reflex told him they'd got him a donor – he thought they said doner.

START NEVER FINISHED

MAIN MODS: CUSTOM BILSTEIN COILOVERS • RENAULTSPORT SEATS • DIMMA BODYKIT





DALE'S 1971 MERCEDES W114

It's been a sound month for Dale... he's had a visit from JVC Audio!

START NEVER FINISHED

MAIN MODS: AIR RIDE SUSPENSION • COBRA SEATS RETRIM • DETROIT STEEL WHEELS





SLIM JULES' BMW E91

Jules give you the lowdown on his recently acquired altitude drop...

START NEVER FINISHED

MAIN MODS: BC COILOVERS • 3SDM 0.04 WHEELS • HYDRO-DIPPED INTERIOR • TINTS • CARBON M SPORT WHEEL



MISSING IN ACTION




GLEENDA'S AUDI RS4

Glenda has had a lot on his plate recently (mainly cabbage and rice) but he'll be back soon.

START NEVER FINISHED

MAIN MODS: MILLTEK EXHAUST • KW COILOVERS • KENWOOD HEADUNIT






MIDGE'S AUDI TT

Midge has been too busy modifying other peoples' cars to do anything to his own.

START NEVER FINISHED

MAIN MODS: 3M WRAP • VOSSEN WHEELS • AIR LIFT SUSPENSION • TUNED ENGINE • ICE INSTALL





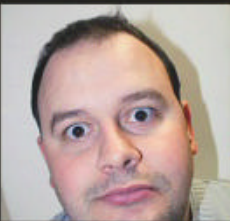
ZERO EV TESLA-POWERED R32 DRIFTER

The Skyline build is gaining momentum, so much so Chris @ Zero EV hasn't had the time to send us his update.

START NEVER FINISHED

MAIN MODS: TESLA ELECTRIC MOTOR • PB COILOVERS • JAFFA CAKES • 19-INCH WHEELS







SLIM JULES' BMW E92

The 450bhp monster isn't missing but it is up for sale. Anyone want it? Send an email to jules.truss@kelsey.co.uk.

START NEVER FINISHED

MAIN MODS: HYBRID TURBOS • AIR LIFT SUSPENSION • AUTOSTAR WHEELS • FROZEN GREY PAINT • 450BHP+






MIDGE'S BEETLE 1.8T

The Beetle has suffered the same fate as the TT for exactly the same reason as stated above.

START NEVER FINISHED

MAIN MODS: K&N INDUCTION KIT • COBRA RECLINERS • SMOOTHED FRONT BUMPER • AIR LIFT • RUSTY PAINT



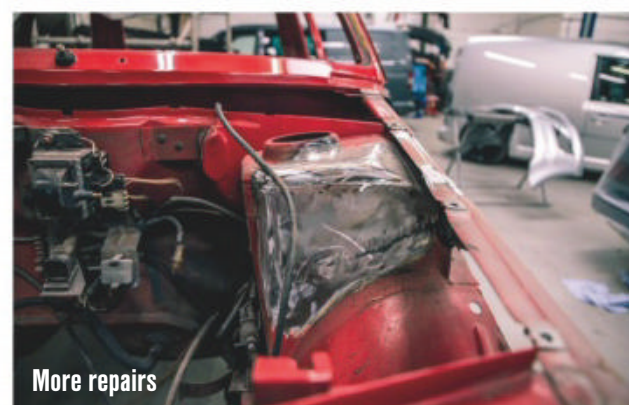
FAST PROJECTS



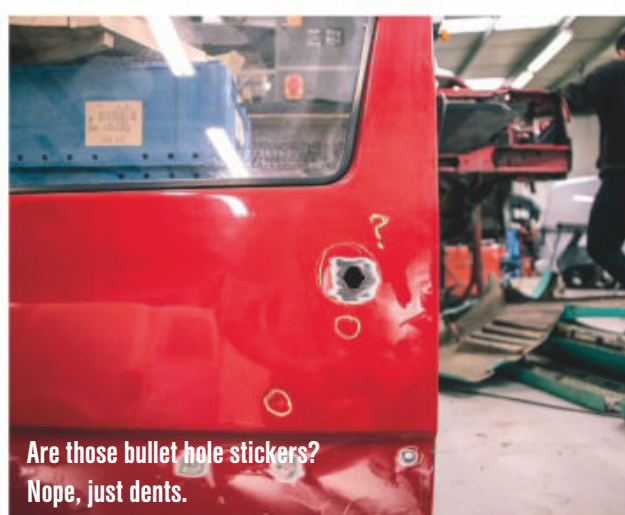
Where does this bit go?



New door sills



More repairs



Are those bullet hole stickers?
Nope, just dents.



Tom V Dale



The refurbished wheels are stunning

TOM'S R5 GT TURBO



Everyone knows Meguiar's and if you read this magazine you'll also know that each year they build a fresh demo vehicle (we've featured the last two, the Crown Victoria Cop Car in 2017 and the Sunny Pickup in 2018). They don't just build these cars to showcase their products but to demonstrate their passion for vehicles. In essence the guys and girls behind Meguiar's UK are just like you and us: car nuts.

So what's Tom V Dale? Well, Tom and Dale are the Meguiar's guys responsible for the demo vehicles, and each year that they embark on the build journey, their conflicting styles and opinions on car building clash. So this year, the head honchos at Megs UK had enough of the bickering and told them to build a car each. And of course, being boys, this has escalated into a fierce battle to see who can build the better car. Both cars will be finished for Players Classic in June 2019 and we're going to follow the build right up until that final reveal.

Name: Tom Clarke

Job Role: Marketer who oversees the UK marketing office, advert placement and key account marketing fulfilment.

A few weeks back we made the decision to buy a donor shell as it would be quicker and cheaper than repairing the original one. Since it arrived, the boys at Reflex have been busy replacing the sills and getting it ready for the bodykit and paint, which will be aided by the delivery of a dustless sander that I received from 3M. The inside and engine bay are almost ready for paint, so we're slowly getting there.

While all this has been going on, The Wheel Specialist team have been working their magic on the original Dimma split rims. They have polished the lips and painted the

barrels satin black, while also sandblasting the centres for Reflex to paint. As you can see, they look brand new and I can't wait to have them built up with new hardware.

Not only that but EBC are refurbishing my callipers, while I've also removed the gearbox from the engine and sent that off for servicing. Oh and I've dropped the rear beam off for sand blasting and painting too, but more about that next month.

Yup, it's all happening and with the Players Classic deadline looming, it's only going to get even crazier.

CONTACTS

www.meguiars.co.uk
www.reflexautodesign.com
www.thewheelspecialist.co.uk



It even looks loud

DALE'S 1971 MERCEDES W114

Name: Dale Masterman

Job Role: Sales and marketing executive,
events coordinator and resident paint nerd.

While The Install Company and Kustom Kolors continue getting the Merc ready for paint, I had a very positive meeting with my mate James Howe of JVC audio fame. James rolled into Meguiar's HQ armed with a plethora of cool audio upgrades for the W114.

Included in the delivery were lots of goodies: a doubleDIN head unit, slimline under seat sub, amps, speakers and even a reversing camera – well, the Merc is a big 'ol barge and I don't want to prang it when it's all painted!

I've always loved my audio and my aim with the Merc is to build the ultimate

Power to the people



cruiser, and a decent sound system is an essential element of fulfilling this goal. I haven't told Phil at The Install Company yet, as he's already got enough on his plate with the air install but I know once he's got over the shock of adding this to his already extensive to-do list he'll relish the challenge of fitting the audio in a subtle way. Although I want the tunes to be loud and clear, I want to keep the Merc looking as clean and as uncluttered as possible, so a stealth install is definitely the way to go.

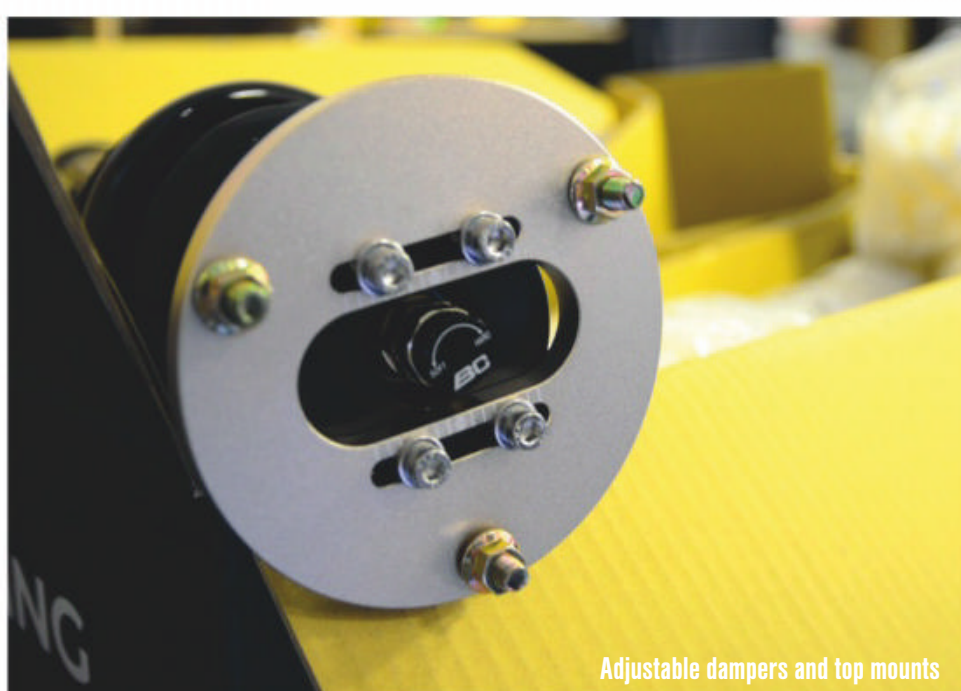
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Old v new

JULES' BMW E91

Jules gets down and dirty with Midge...



So last month I finally managed to get the BC Racing BR Series coilovers fitted to the E91! And by I, I mean Midge and I. It wasn't the easiest of jobs as the car decided it really liked its old suspension and didn't want to release the front struts that easily, but Midge can be a persuasive little bugger and with a bit of elbow grease, a few swear words and brute force we finally managed to get them out and slot in the shiny new adjustable struts and top mounts. The rears were a doddle to fit in comparison and installation all went smoothly once all the old components were removed.

There's a huge choice of coilovers available for the E9X series: everything

from bargain basement eBay specials to full on race spec set ups. But what I needed was something in the middle – this car is never going to see the track but with the mileage I do, cheap components aren't an option either. So I opted for these stunning BC Racing jobbies. Many moons ago, I ran this set-up on my Lexus IS200 and I always held them in high regard. Because the car is my daily and I'm starting to get old, I set the dampers to their softest setting, and I've got to say they ride really well, there's no crashing or banging and the road holding has improved ten fold, and would obviously feel even tighter if I wound the dampers to their

hardest setting. Plus there's loads more adjustment available from the pillowball top mounts and height adjustable struts, so if I ever felt the need to go lower, I could. At present, I've opted for a sensible ride-height because I use the car for work and the boot is often filled with heavy photography equipment or my dog, Maisy.

As you can see, the transformation is huge, especially with my freshly painted 3SDM 0.04s tucked under the arches. I'm loving the new look and it's only going to get better, as my new wheels are now in the UK and I've made plans for a motor-sport inspired livery to be applied to the car. Good times!

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Old v new, part two



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NEXT MONTH

More on the new wheels and that race livery.

The MGB is, for many, the archetypal classic car. More

affordable than an E-Type, less terrifying than a Cobra, friendlier than an SL - often referred to in breathy tones as 'Britain's favourite classic' or somesuch, the MGB is every bit a part of the national fabric as the Mini, cups of tea, cucumber sandwiches, and fighting in kebab shops. Impressively, this quintessentially British sports car was produced in virtually unchanged form for eighteen years; the structure was pretty ground-breaking for the early sixties, employing a monocoque chassis rather than the old body-on-frame of the MGA, although it was by no means a clean-sheet design – the braking and suspension systems were developments of the MGA's, while the B-Series engine could trace its roots back to 1947. The MGB roadster was launched in 1962, and in '65 the coupe version appeared – the MGB GT. For this model, the basic design was reworked by Pininfarina to incorporate an airy glasshouse and a practical hatchback, transforming the B-road blaster into an intercontinental cruiser. A couple of years later, the firm attempted to take this cruiser repositioning to its logical conclusion with the six-cylinder MGC, although this wasn't especially successful and was canned after two years. And the MGB GT V8 arrived in 1973, which rather changed the focus of the model and injected a hefty dose of adrenaline.

In essence then, the MGB is something which is friendly and accessible in four-cylinder form, a bit bonkers with a V8, and largely pointless with six-cylinders. Fair assessment? Possibly, but Mike Wallhead didn't think so, which is why his 1979 MGB GT rocks a six-pot... but not in the way MG intended. And, as you can see, he's gone a bit off-piste with some of the other details too...

TWICE AS NICE

"I bought the car in 2012, when I was 21," he explains. "From an early age, I'd always said that there were so



many cars I wanted to own, that I couldn't get caught up on the same one twice. I had already owned an MGB GT prior to this one, and was looking for another car to drive alongside a classic Mini I had at the time; I was looking at old Triumphs, as well as Japanese cars, when a chap I'd previously bought some cars from mentioned he was having a clear-out of all his cars due to losing storage. I drove down to see him and there were about five cars to choose from at prices too good to pass up - the only catch being that none of them had been on the road for five years."

So Mike found himself with another MGB and, being a determined sort of fella, he had it all fixed up and MoT'd within a few weeks. He pootled around in it for a year or so, having slammed it over some Rostyles and removed the controversial rubber bumpers, before taking it off the road to make some rather more seismic changes. The

MGB

Old school, new rules

A classic MGB is a portal to a bygone age of sepia-tinted simplicity. But a 300bhp MGB that'll do 0-62mph in 4.5-seconds? That's barmy enough to rip the very fabric of time to shreds

Words: **Dan Bevis** Photography: **Lukasz Markowski**





Webasto sunroof was cut out, with the roof skin of Mike's old MGB grafted in, and all of the rot in the body was chased down and eradicated... and while the thing was in bits, he started to get funny ideas about engines.

"I wanted to do something different for an engine swap, something with fuel injection and also a lightweight modern motor – with VVT ideally," he says. "I didn't want to go down the clichéd Rover V8 route as I'd have to modify the engine to get the power I wanted, and I didn't want to lose any reliability or add too much cost." After much head-scratching, Mike hit upon the idea of the Jaguar V6 – a strong, light, modern engine that makes decent power, and continues the theme of hot vee-engined MGs but with a unique little twist.

"I bought a donor Jaguar with a misfire problem,

which turned out to be a faulty coil pack," he continues. "I stripped the engine, trans and loom, and began to fit it all to the 'B. Straight away I struggled, as the angle of the vee is so much wider than that of the Rover V8, so I had to massage the trans tunnel, crossmember, sump and chassis legs slightly to get the engine to fit! Getting the inlets to fit was a whole other story too, resulting in many bonnet configurations and inlet designs over the last three years." The ultimate solution was to fit a set of ITBs to a custom 3D-printed inlet manifold of Mike's own design, along with 3D printed trumpets. It's an excellent design, and he's keen to point out that he's happy to supply a copy of these custom inlets if you're working on something similar – just drop him a line via Instagram, the handle's @mike_wallhead.

SCRAPHEAP CHALLENGE

"The whole idea of cars for me is having something unique and custom that's true to what I want," Mike reasons. "I was brought up by my father who has very good hands-on skills with everything. His mentality has always been 'it sucks to buy something you can make' – a lot of that is shown in this car, with nearly every part being sourced from the scrapyard or just being things I already had that have been reused. I've done all the work on this car myself with help from family and friends; I studied automotive engineering at university, and currently work for BorgWarner turbochargers as a designer – and yes, I do plan to turbo the MGB at some point! The only thing I ever paid for was the remap which was done by Motoscope in Northallerton. I can't recommend them enough!"

The last dyno printout shows a mighty 270bhp, which is a world away from anything the MGB's original design team could have envisaged. And since then the car's been treated to a new inlet design, a new exhaust crossover to aid scavenging, and a few other tweaks, so it should be pushing somewhere around 300bhp. In a car that weighs just 872kg wet, you can imagine how hysterically urgent the power delivery is.

"Every single thing has been modified in some way," says Mike. "Anything that was factory has had holes drilled in it to save weight as well as for aesthetics,



Mike's 3D printed inlet manifold and ITB trumpets



Rota BM8s suit this crazy MGB perfectly

“Mike’s given the car a scrambled steampunk JDM vibe, with its fat Rota wheels and shakotan exhausts poking out of the front wings”





TECH SPEC: MGB

ENGINE & TRANSMISSION:

Jaguar AJ30 3.0-litre V6, ITBs on custom 3D-printed inlet manifolds and trumpets, lightened single mass flywheel, straight-through exhaust with crossover at rear of engine bay, VVT, Emerald standalone ECU, Ford Mustang radiator, Renault Clio alternator reverse-mounted, shortened sump with added baffles, Getrag 5-speed gearbox, Reliant Scimitar rear end, Jaguar E-Type Powr-Lok LSD

CHASSIS:

8x15-inch ET0 Rota BM8 wheels, adjustable Gaz shocks with lowering springs (80-100mm), polybushed throughout, Nissan 300ZX 4-pot front callipers with EBC Green Stuff pads, Scimitar rear brakes, quicker-ratio steering column and rack from chrome-bumper MGB

EXTERIOR:

Fibreglass boot, bonnet and rear arches, steel front wings, early MGB grille, rounded-style fender mirrors, polycarbonate windows

INTERIOR:

Sparco Sprint seats, custom rear roll cage with harness bar, hydraulic handbrake, doors gutted, RMD electronic speedo, tachometer and coolant gauge

THANKS:

"Thanks to my friends Ben and John at Woodhead Engineering in Keighley for any machining work that I needed doing, my friends who have helped a lot over the years pulling engines in and out, and also my parents for putting up with the noise and oil stains on their driveway over the years! Without my father's support and constant guidance I would never have got this car where it is today."

➔ down to bolts being shaved because the factory ones were too long for my liking! The hydraulic handbrake has been drilled for lightness and has a custom handle which I carved to fit my hand from wood from the garden cherry tree, and I completely gutted the doors, they're literally just skins now." A few luxuries do remain in the car – y'know, like seatbelts – but for the most part Mike's been ruthless in his quest for mass-reduction. Even the brake servo was junked as it was deemed an unnecessary extravagance, and you get the impression that he'd feel enormously guilty driving the car after a large breakfast as the second round of toast would throw the power-to-weight ratio to cock – as it stands, the bhp-per-tonne is akin to a Nissan GT-R, with 0-62mph being dispatched in around 4.5-seconds. That, in an MGB, is frankly more bonkers than most people's brains are able to comfortably cope with. As if that wasn't enough to bamboozle onlookers, Mike's given the car a scrambled steampunk JDM vibe, with its fat Rota wheels and shakotan exhausts poking out of the front wings. When he does turbocharge it, Mike tells us he fancies having the turbo (or turbos) positioned outside of the front wings, which is just a magnificent idea. And the most important thing about this uniquely styled and engineered MGB is that it's been built to be driven, and driven hard.

"I use the car as a daily-driver over the summer," he assures us, and the only reason it doesn't see quite so much use in winter is due to the light weight and wide tyres which mean it tends to aquaplane a lot. "I do try to bring it out as much as possible though!" Indeed, with that sort of power and performance, why wouldn't you? What Mike's done here is to take an established part of the classic British firmament and refract it through a dark and distorted filter, giving it modern performance with a race car ethos and an intercontinental aesthetic. It's like no other MGB you'll see on the road – and you won't see it for long, as it's pretty bloody quick and it doesn't like to hang about. Old school, new rules. And, in the best possible way, as daft as a brush. ■



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READERS' RIDES



Front face-lift conversion

SAM SPENDER'S CIVIC TYPE R

FC says: Some EP3 Civic Type Rs live out their lives as hardcore track cars, while others become nurtured show-winning beauties. Sam here has decided to take inspiration from both of these camps when modifying his extremely versatile show-and-go Civic.

Now rocking a lick of that iconic bright green colour more commonly seen on Ford Focus RSs (with a hint of gold pearl for extra bling), the exterior of this hatch also sports

equally-as-shiny Japan Racing alloys on each corner to ensure it seriously looks the part wherever you catch it proudly parked up.

But that's really only half of the story, with that K20 motor under the bonnet now being treated to a Rotrex supercharger system which helps the car to kick out a seriously healthy 313bhp now! With BC Racing coilovers set up to perfection, this really is one car that drives just as well as it looks.

Inside, a custom carbon fibre steering wheel from Pimp My Civic looks the part, with other smatterings of the lightweight material found elsewhere in the cabin, too.

It's always nice to see a build that results in the car not only looking a whole lot better, but becoming a whole lot more powerful in the process. Tidy!



Japan Racing JR15 wheels in chrome



Main mods:

Re-sprayed Ford Ultimate Green with gold pearl; front face-lift conversion; front splitter and side skirt extensions; Rotrex supercharger kit; Hondata K-Pro ECU; Pimp My Civic custom red/carbon fibre steering wheel; carbon fibre centre console with Kenwood stereo; custom EMP Performance exhaust with valve; BC Racing coilovers; Japan Racing JR15 wheels in chrome.

SHOW US WHAT YOU'VE GOT!

Here's your chance to show off both your ride and your photography skills in the pages of FC. To enter your car just open a fresh new email, put 'Readers' Rides Submission' in the subject line and send us a few pics of the best bits (larger than 1MB with no ghosting or logos, and you must have the photographer's permission) along with a short spec and a paragraph telling us why your motor deserves to adorn these hallowed pages. Ping the whole lot over to jules.truss@kelsey.co.uk and we'll do the rest.



READERS' RIDES



Megashift pearlescent tech offers a flipped colour scheme



ABI WHITTY'S **NISSAN MICRA**

FC says: As transformations go, they don't come much more dramatic than in the case of Abi's Nissan Micra here. It has received the mother of all overhauls over the last 12 months or so, to become something a whole lot more special than the bog-standard white car it once was.

It all revolves around that frankly bonkers re-spray that utilises 'Megashift' pearlescent tech brought over from the States to offer the ultimate in flipped colour schemes.

Abi explains how the job was applied to perfection by both Bodytech and Limitless – two firms who continue to look after the car's

bodywork to this day. A comprehensive, floor-scraping body kit was also added at the same time, imported over from Japan and giving off all the right JDM vibes to go with the new hue.

But that's not where the goodies end, as this curvy hatch is now one of the first of its kind in the country to sport an air suspension system, courtesy of a trick AirTech kit that offers up various ride heights at the touch of a button. It's safe to say it looks nothing short of mega when dumped to the floor, too!

The job has been finished with some equally-as-special touches inside, including colour-matched trim panels and an NRG

steering wheel to make the Micra feel that little bit more premium to pilot.

This is one little Nissan you won't be forgetting in a hurry!

Main mods:

Full re-spray in Megashift pearlescent paint with Bodytech/Limitless coatings, JDM body kit and rear lights; Custom Lights bespoke tinted headlights; AirTech air suspension system; Manifold custom twin-exit exhaust system; NRG steering wheel; re-worked interior trim.



ALICE BRIGGS' **FIESTA ZETEC S**

FC says: When Alice picked up her Fiesta Zetec S as a completely standard example a couple of years back, it was inevitable that a raft of modifications were to ensue after she swiftly nicknamed her new steed the Dark Destroyer.

Over the course of the next few months, plenty of subtle styling upgrades appeared to add extra drama to the black hatchback's modern lines, with a memorable black-and-blue colour scheme soon emerging, too.

The TRC Low Line splitter kit was a great start in giving the Mk7 a little more aggression, with parts like the foglight surrounds, brake callipers and plenty of the interior soon sporting that contrasting blue hue to set things off nicely.

Alice soon started going the extra mile as her passion really started to flow, with custom Dark Destroyer gel badging soon taking pride of place on various areas of the bodywork.

"My favourite mods are under the bonnet, though!" she grins as we check out that normally aspirated motor, which is now pushing out a healthy 134bhp thanks to a J1 induction kit, custom free-flowing exhaust system and a re-map to tie things together.

Great job so far, Alice!

Main mods:

Eibach Pro Sport springs; blue foglight surrounds; blue brake callipers; gloss black/ocean blue interior; gloss black diffuser; TRC Low Line splitter kit; headlight eyebrows; Maxton Design spoiler lip; custom sun strip; custom gel badges; blue footwell lights; LED boot lights; Autobeam V3 Halo headlights; Rallyflapz mud flaps; hydro-dipped engine covers; short shifter; J1 induction kit; custom back box delete with DTM tips; ECU re-map.



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ARSE END

Quotes of the Month:

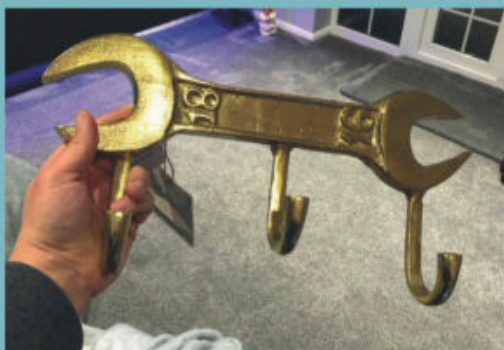


Midge: "My Aldi kicks arse!"

Jules: "Not as much as my Beemer."

Midge: "No, Aldi, not Audi. Look how many bobbly ones I got in this bastard!"

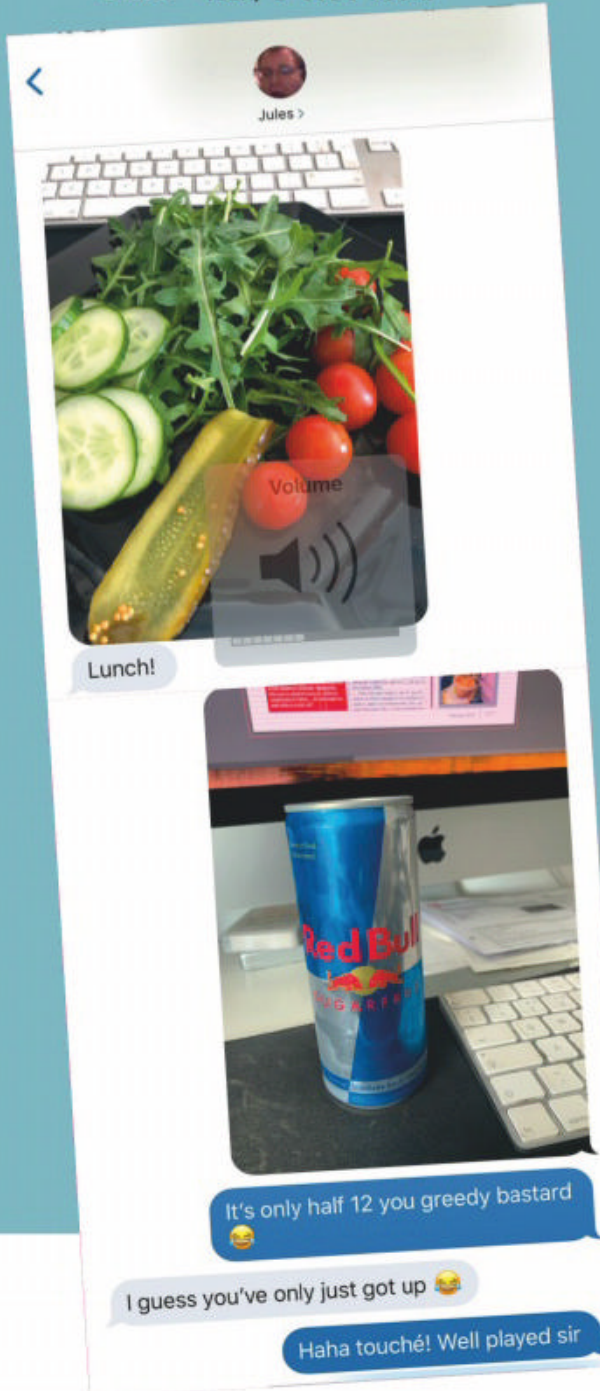
Jules: "You really are a simple creature."



Jules: "Look what I got."

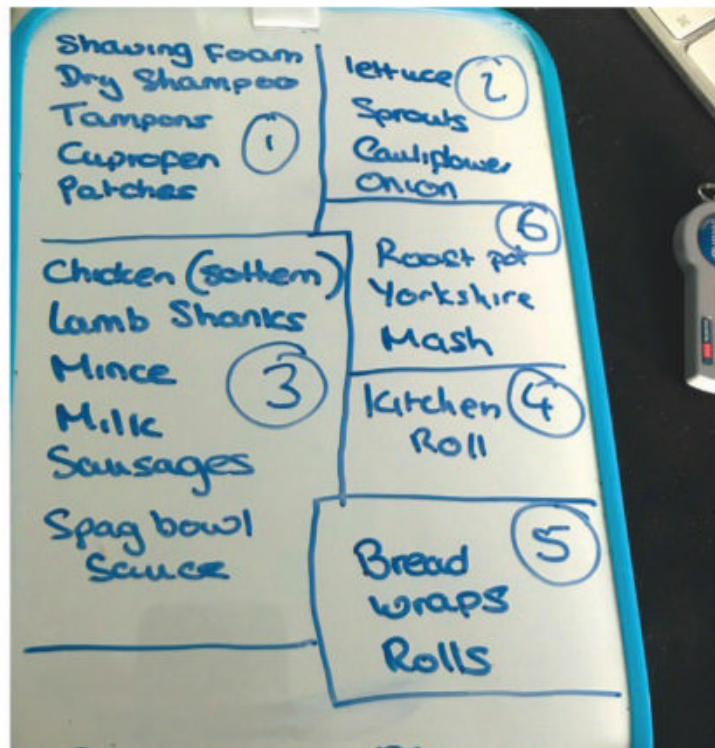
Midge: "Do you even know what that is?"

Jules: "Yeah, a coat hook."



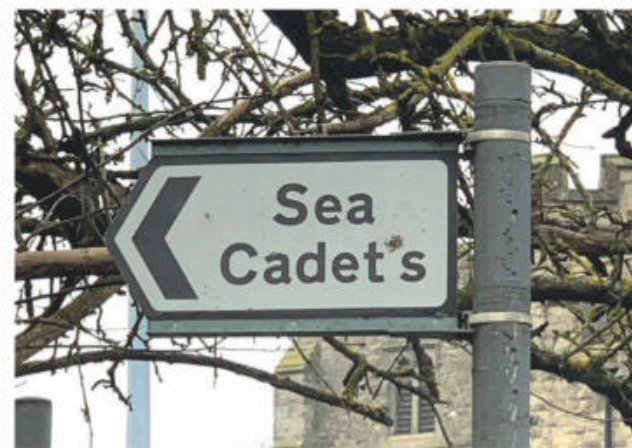
Master Chef

We have mentioned that Jules is quite the cook nowadays and he says his secret is only using the freshest ingredients. That said, we'd steer clear of his latest traditional French dish though – we're not sure that counts as foraging boss!



Shopaholic

We've said many a time before that our Midge is hands-down the biggest shopaholic in the business. There's not much more you can say about a tart who owns over 100 pairs of kicks that he doesn't need... other than never accept an invitation to go to any American outlet mall with him (you're bloody right there! – Jules). Still, as we accidentally found out this month, his kleptomaniac problems clearly don't stretch to normal shopping. He's always so busy that he actually needs the missus to write the isle numbers on the list! Sorry, did we say busy? Lazy is the word we meant...



Grammar Nazis

OK, so out of the 50'000 or so words you'll find in every mag, we have been known to let in the odd typo from time to time. Of course, you may argue that worrying about these things is kind of missing the point of the features, but if you do let that sort of thing boil your piss, you'll love this.

Still, the weirdest thing about this particular grammatical error isn't the random apostrophe, it's that it was actually spotted by our Midge – that's a first and no mistake. You know what they say about people in glass houses, son!



Sweeet

Nope. What makes our Jules such a big hit with the ladies isn't his all-round sunny disposition or the fact his wallet is so big he needs a special, oversized pocket to cart it around. You just can't not love a bloke who can make his own sweets on Valentine's Day, right? He's like Willy Wonker, he really is (yeah, but only if you miss-spell it – Midge).

TOP 5 VIDEOS JAP SPECIAL



MAZSPORT 13B TURBO MAZDA RX-7

We love any FC RX-7 to be fair. Although we love this seven-second monster more. 13B power for the win!
www.fastcar.co.uk/videos/mazsport-13b-turbo-mazda-rx-7



BAGGED DATTO

There's no denying that the boys at Air Lift Performance are absolutely killing it with this super-stanced 240Z. This is living the dream.
www.fastcar.co.uk/videos/bagged-datsun-240z



A90 DRIFT SUPRA

This 2JZ A90 is the world's very first drift build using the new Supra. Daigo Saito and his guys certainly weren't wasting any time, eh?
www.fastcar.co.uk/videos/2jz-a90-toyota-supra

Text of the Month

It's the lunch of champions for our Jules... Midge, not so much!



Proper Posh

When Jules sends you on a shoot and says, "Don't worry, I've booked some posh seats on the plane", whatever you do, don't think you'll be traveling anywhere in business class. What he actually means is that many economy seats are made by bum-perching gods Recaro. Although that doesn't come as much comfort on a 5am flight to Glasgow. Bastard.



Big Loser

When we said our Jules was an award-winning Editor we bloody meant it. Admittedly, we've yet to see any awards for actual journalism, modifying cars or working in general. But we're still mighty proud of the (less) big guy for his Slimming World Greatest Loser gong. Top work mate. We've bought you a lovely cake to celebrate...

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BRZ VS MR2

It's the street battle we've all been waiting for... the old-skool MR2 Turbo and the BRZ with a bolt-on blower. But who will be victorious? www.fastcar.co.uk/videos/turbocharged-hks-subaru-brz-vs-jdm-toyota-mr2-gt-s-turbo



EVO X ON AIR

Here's another bagged monster, and a rally legend that should make the purists puke even more. We absolutely love it! www.fastcar.co.uk/videos/evo-x-on-air-ride

BLAST FROM THE PAST

ISSUE 291 – JUNE 2010

9-years and 117 issues ago...

- We weren't messing about. We built the cover Lupo and then gave it away!
- What's this, a Mk1 Fezzie with a Kawasaki ZZR lump in the boot? Barry Lynch's Ford was a proper legend!
- Dan Atkinson's super-lightweight MX-5 was rife for some sideways action.
- Lots of ladies in this issue. Like, lots and lots of 'em. Those were the days!
- The legendary Mimms meet was still actually at Mimms in those days. Weird.
- Ricky Mitchell's EG Civic proves that having a mega carbon footprint has always been most important.



NEXT ISSUE

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FEATURED: Rocket Bunny-style Fiesta, Bagged Scooby, R32-powered Mk3 Golf & Badass BMW 1-Series.



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